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HORATIO PLODGERS

S. H. CHURCH

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HORATIO PLODGERS:

A Story of To-Day.

BY

S. H. CHURCH.

Author of "The Rash Promise, A Comedy."



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HORATIO PLODGERS.

CHAPTER I.

A RASH PROMISE.

It was election day in Bucksport. Horatio Plodgers had been nominated for Congress against the present representative, Hon. Herodotus Tumkins, and a personal and bitter campaign ensued. The speeches that the candidates delivered from the stump produced among their respective followers an animosity and intolerance which led to frequent disturbances of the public peace; and as the time for the election drew near, the intensity of feeling increased until to-day it seemed to have reached the climactic point.

Nor were the candidates themselves free from the general excitement. Early in the day Mr. Plodgers had stolen away from the polls to seek the seclusion of his home; and the reports brought to him from time to time of the progress of the balloting had roused him to great anxiety. It was now long past noon, and he nervously

paced the floor of the old sitting-room, often stopping to look expectantly from the window.

"Well, well, well," he said, pausing a moment; "I haven't been in such a state of trepidation since my wedding day! Money, property, friends—these surround me, but not yet satisfied, I am reaching for the bubble reputation in the stormy sea of politics."

He folded his arms across his portly chest, threw back his head, and exclaimed, with a melancholy intonation, "By ambition fell the angels!"

While he was turning over in his mind the reflections which this sentiment suggested, there entered a man of eight-and-twenty years. His clothes were barely respectable and saved him from a shabby appearance only by the skill with which their defects had been brushed and patched from sight.

"Blinks, Blinks," demanded Mr. Plodgers, "how goes the election? Is Tumkins polling heavily?"

"Heavily!" repeated Blinks; "not one man in ten votes for him."

"Honorable Horatio Plodgers!" muttered the candidate dreamily. "Blinks, that sounds well."

"And five thousand dollars a year?"

"Better. Blinks, when I enter the hall of our na-

tional legislature as the representative of this free and enlightened constituency, the first duty which shall claim my attention will be—"

"To draw your mileage allowance?"

"Ah! I presume it will be proper to attend to that first. But, my respected constituent," he continued grandiloquently, "the corruption of which our Government has been redolent for so long a period, and which has compromised us in the eyes of other nations, must be checked, crushed, annihilated! Is Tumkins at the polls?"

"No. He pays small attention to your opposition. He said last night that you are an imbecile and a parvenue."

Mr. Plodgers flushed with indignation, and the collar of his shirt seemed for a moment much too small for his swelling throat.

"Blinks," he cried, "defeat that scoundrel—secure my election. If votes are wanting, buy them—do you hear, Blinks, buy them! I tell you we must beat the bribing rascal!"

Blinks looked approvingly at his patron, promised to do his best for him at the polls, and departed.

"And yet," said Mr. Plodgers to himself, "I promised to reform the evils of public life. Oh, man! thou art an

inconsistent animal; yet thy inconsistencies make up a perfect whole. Human nature is a mosaic, composed of a thousand contradictions of character. Man's theories are opposed to his practices. His impulses are good, but his passions obscure them. Humanity and divinity are the forces at war in him, and they fill his life with idiosyncracies. The divine part of his nature strives for the attainment of perfection; the human part seeks that which is of the earth—the indulgence of passion, the gratification of self, the Devil!—Stephanie, come in!"

The last words were addressed to a young girl who entered the room and placed her hand affectionately upon his shoulder. She could not have been more than nineteen, and was so slightly and compactly made that she looked even younger. Her hair was of that auburn shade than which there is no more beautiful color. Her fair face displayed ruddy health and symmetry; the features were of delicate cast; the eyes were blue, the brow was thoughtful, the nose perfect, the mouth small, the lips were red and full, and the chin protruded just far enough to indicate a decided strength of character.

"Why, Stephanie!" cried Mr. Plodgers, kissing the white forehead, "have you come to congratulate the Hon.

Horatio? I like the sound of that title more every time I say it."

"Not yet, papa," she answered, "you know it is not time. Besides—"

"Well, what besides?"

"Only this, papa—I would rather congratulate you upon your defeat than your election."

Mr. Plodgers looked hurt, but his daughter's disapproval of his political aspirations was not a new story, and he did not attempt to controvert her in this instance.

"Well," said he, "I'll wager a dollar against the Old Lady of Threadneedle street that I will win. Now confess, Stephanie, wouldn't it turn that sober head of yours to find yourself a leader in Washington society?"

"No, sir, it would not," she answered, stoutly.

"Honor bright?"

"Honor bright. I would forego the pleasure a hundred times over rather than secure it by a step on your part which my judgment cannot approve."

"Stephanie, you have common-sense views upon many things, but I am irritated by the position which you and your mother have taken in this matter. Why do you oppose me? Is it because you think that I am not fitted to sit in Congress? You hesitate—I might wish for a higher respect from my own child."

"Papa, it is not because you are not *good* enough!" she cried.

"Daughter, it is partly for your sake that I desire this honor. What advantages that you do not already enjoy can my wealth secure to you in this obscure location? Your advancement stopped when you graduated from school. But in Washington, supported by official rank and wealth, you would soon win a high position in society. Now, come, Puss," he said, jocularly, "suppose you were sought in marriage by a general in the army? Washington is where one meets the generals, you know."

"Why," she replied, merrily, "that would be one occasion when even the most successful general would taste the bitterness of defeat."

"Well, then, a judge of the Supreme Court?"

"They are all married, I hope. If not, they should not begin now to look for young wives."

"A foreign minister?"

"I am too patriotic to wed him."

"Then, you incorrigible goddess of liberty, would you accept a congressman?"

"If he won my love."

"Which, I warrant, he never would! Stephanie, you have returned from school with a foolish notion of an

ideal man in your mind, who, take my word for it, you will never meet. Now, promise me that if I am elected to-day, you will only marry with one who is also a congressman?"

The temples throbbed a little faster than usual, and the color came in suspicious haste to her cheeks.

"Stephanie, if the daughter of the Honorable Horatio Plodgers were to marry the Honorable Somebody Else, just think, my dear, how such a match would increase my political influence."

"Father! would you—would you barter my happiness for political influence?"

Mr. Plodgers could only say "Tut, tut."

"Papa," she cried, striving to repress her emotion, "you know that I would grant any request from you that had a shadow of reason in it. But to make the promise you have proposed—and from such a motive!"—

"Lord bless me—tears! There is nothing to cry over. I ask you simply not to marry anyone but a congressman except with my consent. Am I a Turk? I might not refuse to permit you to marry a hod-carrier!"

"If he could carry political influence in his hod!" she answered; and then, "Papa, I think you love me too dearly to ever suggest unhappiness, and so I promise that

I will never marry anyone but a—. But, suppose a congressman doesn't ask me?"

"We will risk it, Stephanie. You promise?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. The promise will be binding only in case I beat Tumkins. And now I'll to the polls; the thing is about decided. If elected, I will have to make a speech, Stephanie. I don't like that feature. I can think like a philosopher and write sensibly well, but I am no orator, and to be called on for a speech under such conditions is terrific, very terrific."

CHAPTER II.

THE WOOING O'T.

STEPHANIE PLODGERS, even in her adolescent days, was a fairy poem. Reverence and religion were intensely developed within her, and she possessed that kind of steadfast faith for which, in earlier ages, men and women were led to the stake. In her young girlhood she was a missionary to the flowers. With the dawn of Spring she would go forth upon the hillside to cull the timid blossoms, which she called the first fruits of them that slept!

Grace and modesty were her winning traits. "Her voice was ever soft and gentle." In the passage of the seasons, in the blooming of the flowers, in the fading leaves, she beheld a close analogy to the brevity of human existence, and as often as returning Spring called Nature from her cold sleep, she saw, as through the eye of faith, a presage of her own soul's immortality—of its resurrection into deathless life.

Even the birds recognized her protecting love. When the orioles began to build their nests, she would place strips of cloth and bits of yarn near her window, and

they would come in fearless gratitude to get them, and flying to the trees would weave them into their nests, and then return for more. Once she held an end of one of these strips in her hand and pushed the other end through the slat of her shutter. A bold oriole caught the yarn in his beak and tugged valiantly at it, and when the bird began to lose his temper, she released her hold saying, "There, old fellow," and he flew away, answering her merry langh with a chirp of triumph.

When she was eight years old her father brought home a lad named George Bolton. He was a manly fellow in his early "teens," friendless and poor, but with an honest face and industrious habits, which soon won for him Mr. Plodgers' protection and regard. Bolton was sent to school, and afterwards pursued the study of the law. He was Stephanie's constant friend and counsellor, and she learned to cherish for him all the affection of a sister. Bolton began to aspire to literary renown, and once between his chapters in Blackstone, he wrote an article and sent it to a magazine.

"Oh," cried Stephanie, when he told her of it, "I shall be so anxious until I hear whether they publish it."

But those fellows who edit the magazines have poor taste—the piece came back, rejected, and her disappoint-

ment was nearly equal to his own. Many of his scribblings he submitted for her judgment. She would listen to them with close attention, and if she had objections to make or suggestions to offer, they came with such graceful kindness, as if she were fearful of wounding his pride, that he sometimes sacrificed his most laborious platitudes to her wise criticism.

She was sent away to school, and Bolton, now an attorney, left her father's house, and in an office near by, commenced the struggle for existence. When Stephanie returned, graduated, he hastened to bid her welcome. The meeting was not what either had expected. Upon her part it was embarrassed and shy; upon his it was constrained and awkward. She called him Mr. Bolton; he called her Miss Stephanie. They were no longer brother and sister; why, was not clear; but each perceived that it was so, and when Bolton left her he knew that he loved her as his own soul.

Her taste was fine, and her imagination was filled with the ideal poetry of life, insomuch that her bright thoughts fell in conversation like rills of spring water—fresh, pure and sparkling. In the limited society of Bucksport she was sought after by all, but her genial charity won her attention more to those who, from diffidence or lack

of social qualities, were neglected by others, than to her own admirers.

On the day of the election, after Mr. Plodgers left her she stood gazing out from the window until his retreating form could no longer be seen.

"A year ago," she thought, "papa was the most contented gentleman, the most devoted father in Bucksport. Now, his ambitious expectations have elicited from me a promise which my heart whispers is a rash one."

"Stephanie, where is your father?" asked Mrs. Plodgers, as she entered the room.

"At the polls, mamma."

"Goodness me, always there!" exclaimed the lady. "We haven't had a quiet moment since he was bitten by this political mad dog. I am distrustful of the results. But, dear—you look worried?"

Stephanie colored. "It is nothing, mamma." And then, placing her arms around her mother's neck, she cried, "Washington could not provide a happier home than this, could it?"

"No, child, I think not. But even if your father is elected, we shall still retain our homestead here."

"But there are many old faces to leave behind," said Stephanie.

Janet, the maid, entered.

"Mr. Bolton asks for you, Miss Plodgers."

"George Bolton!"

"Why, Stephanie, you are ill!" cried Mrs. Plodgers, alarmed at the paleness that overspread her face.

"No, mother, it is nothing. I will see him here, Janet;" and then added inaudibly, "oh, that fatal promise!"

Mrs. Plodgers turned to follow Janet from the room, as Bolton appeared in the doorway.

"Mrs. Plodgers," he cried cheerily, "I congratulate you. This place at least is free from the excitement of politics."

"Only for the present moment. Have you any news?"

"Nothing. But we will know shortly;" and then, turning to Stephanie, who was nervously fingering the pages of a book, he said, "It is long since we have read that together."

"Then read it now, children," said Mrs. Plodgers, "while I prepare tea. Mr. Bolton, I shall expect you to remain for supper. Don't say no," and the good lady hurried away.

"It is the 'Hanging of the Crane,'" said Stephanie, in reply to Bolton's remark. "Here is the passage that pleased you."

"May I read it?"

"'And now I sit and muse on what may be,
And in my vision see or seem to see,
Through floating vapors interfused with light,
Shapes indeterminate, that gleam and fade
As shadows passing into deeper shade
Sink and elude the sight.'

"Now, mark the picture," he said:

"'For two alone there in the hall
Is spread the table round and small.
Upon the polished silver shine
The evening lamps, but more divine
The light of love shines over all—
Of love that says not mine and thine,
But ours, for ours is thine and mine.
They want no guests to come between
Their tender glances like a screen,
And tell them tales of land and sea,
And whatsoever may betide
The great forgotten world outside.
They want no guests. They needs must be
Each other's own best company.'"

The poem affected them both.

"Do you not think," he asked, "that such a scene must stir one's heart to better feelings?"

"It is a picture of love," she replied; "and true love is like true religion."

"Do you then consider religion to be equal to love?"

"Yes—or, rather, it is a part of love. True love can only live in conjunction with religion."

Confusion overspread Bolton's face.

"You well know that I am not religious."

"Apparently you are not, but there is a dormant spark of faith in the hearts of most men which demands only a certain influence to fan it into warmth and fire. In such a condition—forgive me if I say it—is your heart."

"Prove it," he said.

"Well," she began, blushing to find the burden of proof resting with her, "you love what is beautiful—the rocks, the hills, the trees and the flowers. In our play-days I have seen you look in rapture at a sunset, oblivious of all else. This is worship inherent. Of itself it is vague and illusive, but faith develops it and makes it a controlling power in life."

"But this faith I cannot develop," he replied. "The religion of to-day is indeed a noble system. Time has failed to add a single quality to the fulness of the sermon on the mount. But that proves nothing for its inspiration, or for the divine origin of him who uttered it. Christianity, it seems to me, is the outgrowth of the necessities of mankind, and not a revelation from on high.

As the illusions of life fade away before the advance of years, and our dearest hopes are abandoned unfulfilled, it is DESPAIR that kindles faith in men, and they look beyond the grave for an existence that cannot be attained here. Human happiness is a flower—sweet-scented and beautiful—but when you stretch forth your hand to pluck it the leaves fall apart and you grasp only a withered stem."

"But the flower will bloom hereafter," she said.

"Faith again," he answered, smiling, "blind, eager faith. Not a whisper has ever come back from the spirit land; no angel's wings have fluttered—no white robes have rustled—to give us an assurance of our hope. When I daily see men sink into the grave I would gladly believe that there is some atom of their organism, or some spark of their intelligence, that defies corruption. But I cannot believe it," he added, laughing, "upon the testimony of anyone who has never died."

"You do not believe it," said she, "because you measure your reason against divine wisdom. When the bare conclusions of your speculations are not clear, you doubt. You refuse to believe that there is anything beyond the reach of men's perceptions. You demand that divine revelation shall be made an exact science. This means

simply that the Creator must unfold to each successive age an occult manifestation of his purposes. The demand is at variance with the interests of all society. The greatest men of all ages have held that God is a living being, and that the human spirit has an immortal destiny. Does not history testify that this teaching is a purifying inspiration to mankind?"

Bolton was staggered. Her calm, but earnest manner drew his heart towards her, and he would fain have confessed the vanity which made him a doubter; but skepticism is a stubborn disease, and he found it hard to yield.

"But there is an irrepressible conflict between Religion and Science," said he; "a conflict which neither prophet, priest or king, has ever reconciled."

"You mistake, my friend," she answered, "there is no conflict. Christ says, 'Beware of science *falsely* so-called,' throwing no slur upon science, but upon quasi-science. Science is Nature, and he who would be a scientist must be a naturalist. If his reading of the book of Nature forces his conclusions against his Maker, there can be no stronger proof of a wrong interpretation. Nature is simply God's creation, and art and science are her offspring, for art is Nature methodized and science is Nature anatomized. The inquiry of false science is, in

respect to man's origin—it cares nothing for his destiny; and in its teaching of this doctrine it is false not only to itself, not only to the Creator, but, even excusing the heresy so far, it is also false to humanity, which it pretends to elevate! You smile, Mr. Bolton—does the subject amuse you?"

"Pardon me!" he cried; "I am in the deepest sympathy with your argument, and I could listen further. But you have said that love can exist only where it is in harmony with religion. Then I am religious even to the degree of your own sweet faith!"

The face which was a moment ago flushed by the zeal with which she had defended her belief, now turned pale as she thought, "Oh, that promise!"

"Stephanie," said Bolton, taking her hand gently, "I have not wealth or position to offer. When I say I love you, I have said all. No words could convey more. My conscience protests that I am unworthy of your goodness; but when I am with you there is a new and better creation within me, inspired by only the hope of winning your affection. Will you not speak to me?" he pleaded, searching the blue eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Bolton," she cried, placing her hand upon her throbbing heart, "this has shocked me! It is so

sudden. Do not urge this suit upon me—I cannot now consider what you have said. Let me compose myself—leave me now—again—in half-an-hour you shall be answered!"

"Oh, Stephanie," he said, "you are the very light and life of my heart—you are my other self, my sister soul! Every dream of my life is wrapped around you. Stephanie, you have spoken with touching faith of a higher life. Through the eyes of love I now see that to which blind reason stood averse. My love for you is indestructible, it is everlasting! Search your heart, then, my playmate, my friend, my love—and I will wait."

She turned to speak; he was gone.

Only from the quivering lip and the throbbing temples could the thoughts that were chasing each other beneath her fair face, be conjectured. For a long time she stood listening to the warring between love and duty. Her heart cried out in her lover's behalf, but the memory of that fatal promise forced upon her mind the imperative conclusion that she must reject Bolton's suit. There was only one chance of a different result, and dispair impelled her to grasp this chance with the hope of a love that was now a living fire—perhaps her father would be defeated.

CHAPTER III.

A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

Bolton was about to leave the house when his attention was arrested by loud cheering in the street. Hurrying into a lower room, he looked from the window and saw a crowd of men advancing towards the house.

"Here is news from the election," he said to himself. "The half-hour is nearly up. Great heavens! Can it be possible that Stephanie is basing her decision upon the result of this election. Oh, never, never!"

"Can you tell me," cried Mrs. Plodgers, at the door, "what is the meaning of this riot?"

"An adjunct, my dear lady, of that kind of greatness that is thrust upon one."

"And when is it all to end? It is dreadful!"

"Well, the excitement will begin to subside," replied Bolton, cheerily, "when I can congratulate you upon being the Hon. Mrs. Horatio."

"Ah, my friend, such distinction will not atone for the discomforts which will follow it. My husband's life, or mine, has not been of a kind that will be benefitted by

these honors. They may offer brilliant opportunities to Stephanie, but the poor child does not court them; and," she added, looking upon him with motherly kindness, "her happiness is to be found nearer home."

"Dear Mrs. Plodgers," he replied, "she will be true to her heart's best feeling, whatever may be the circumstances that surround her."

In the meantime the noise outside had been increasing with the number of the crowd, until now the door was thrown violently open, and the mob entered, carrying on their shoulders the redoubtable Mr. Plodgers, and cheer followed cheer as they placed him on the dinner table.

"I told you, ma'am," said Tom Blinks, exultantly, as he forced his way to Mrs. Plodger's side, "that he would be elected if I helped him!"

Some one shouted for a speech, which met the vociferous approval of the men, and the successful candidate began to address them:

"My beloved constituents," said Mr. Plodgers, "this day will ever hold a prominent page in Memory's book. In after years, when my soul shall float amidst the ethereal memories of the dead past, and I shall look back to this glorious and triumphant hour, my only sentiment will be one of pride and gratitude for the success which

has thus attended my first political step! [Cheers.] My fellow citizens, in entering thus far into the bright temple of Fame, I will not deny that I have conducted an aggressive policy against my defeated opponent. I will not deny it! But in thus trampling upon the gentler feelings of my nature I was prompted solely by a fond desire to save my country from impending ruin. If my conduct needs any further palliation, I will only say, in my own defense, that, in his last public speech, my opponent descended so low in verbal villainy as to apply to *me* the terms, 'imbecile' and 'parvenue' [groans]. Gentlemen, your sympathy strengthens me, and I rejoice that I have defeated this infidel, this mysogynist, whom 'twere base libel on the human race to term a man—or on the horse race to term an ass!" [Loud and prolonged applause.]

Mr. Plodgers drew a very large red handkerchief from the rear part of his apparel and wiped the perspiration from his heated brow. When the cheering ceased he continued:

"My fellow citizens, look into the pages of history and tell me where are the great men of the past? Where is Phythagoras? Where is Demosthenes? Where is Epicure? Where is—Antagonist? Where is—Pleiades? All—all are dead. Not one is left to listen to the eulo-

gies of posterity. [Cheers.] Thus we may see that life is transient, and that the vital spark, like the candle-flame, must flicker, and flicker, until Time puts his eternal snuffers on the wick!"

The classical turn which the orator gave to his speech was somewhat confusing to his hearers, and, finding himself on dangerous ground, he again changed his line of thought, the peroration being equal to his exordium.

"My friends," said he, "in going as your representative to the capital city of our great country—a city which has most rightfully been named after that paragon of truth, that hero of the hatchet, that ancestor of his native soil, G. Washington [cheers], I give you my pledge that I shall continue to be a Reformer; that I shall endeavor to so improve the agricultural facilities of the country that we can shortly furnish corn on the cob for all nations; to so alter the game laws that ruthless huntsmen shall not destroy the animation of nature with an impious hand; to purify the civil service; to pacify the bitterness of party strife; to heal the breach; to wipe out the past! [cheers.] And when this shall have been accomplished—when the American Bird shall soar aloft in Freedom's silvery light—when from her wings the shades of lasting Peace shall fall upon this prosperous nation, then, knowing that I

have elevated my race and defeated Herodotus Tumkins, O! let me die serene and happy in the sanguinary hope of a bright hereafter!"

The cheers that greeted the conclusion of the speech seemed to shake the house to its foundations. Mr. Plodgers was congratulated upon all sides, until his hands were nearly wrung from his body.

In the midst of the address, Stephanie appeared in the entrance, and Bolton, forcing himself through the crowd to her side, whispered that the half hour was past.

"Is my father elected?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Yes."

She turned ashen pale; and her face reflected an unutterable disappointment; but drawing her hand from his anxious grasp, she said with all the firmness she could command:

"*Then*, Mr. Bolton, it is impossible."

She hurried from the room, and Bolton, stupified by her refusal, staggered back against the door.

Meanwhile the voters, ignorant of the tragedy that had befallen these young hearts, continued to hurrah lustily for Mr. Plodgers, who still stood upon the table, bowing and smiling; while Mrs. Plodgers, exclaiming, "Goodness me," sank prostrate into a comfortable chair, and swooned away.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE WOODS.

One year had passed since Mr. Plodgers took his seat in Congress. It was a bright Spring morning. The woods near Bucksport, in their fresh verdure, foretold the coming glory of the season. Nature had exchanged her mourning garb for her Spring garments. She raised her drooping head, and her tears of joy fell clear and sparkling upon the struggling plants, which forced themselves through the frozen earth, invigorated and refreshed. Flocks of birds flitted in the sunlight, and gathered on the trees, where they seemed to be in earnest rehearsal of the anthems they were to sing throughout the Summer. A stream of water murmured an accompaniment to their song, and the rustling boughs, kissed by a soft breeze, waved a benediction upon the renewed life.

No more delightful place for a walk could be chosen, than through this wood.

Alice Crivet, accompanied by Janet, the maid, who has just returned from her post of service in the Plodgers' mansion at Washington, is come hither to enjoy the morn-

ing while she hears messages from her absent friends.

Miss Crivet is a cousin of Stephanie's, two and twenty years old, tall, with a round, dimpled face, hair of the darkest brown, and eyes that sparkle with good humor.

"Here we are, Janet, in the woods of Bucksport. I haven't been here since politics banished my Stephanie from this dear old place."

"Nor have I, Miss Alice, and that was a year ago," answered Janet. "Before her father's election to the whats-its-name—Congress, Miss Stephanie used to bring me here quite often. But I forgot it till now; I have a letter for him."

"For who?"

"For Mr. Bolton."

"Not from Stephanie?"

"Yes; here it is. She said I must give it to you, and you would deliver it to him."

Alice received the missive in surprise, but said nothing.

"Here comes a man!" cried Janet.

"A man in this wood," said Alice dramatically, "and two unprotected women here?"

"How romantic it would be if he would run away with us! wouldn't it be splendid, Miss Alice?"

"I would much rather he would run from us, Janet,"

she answered with a little concern, as the yet unconscious interloper drew nearer. "Who is he?"

"He turns this way, he is coming here. Why, it is Mr. Bolton."

"I can give him the letter," said Alice.

They stepped behind a massive sycamore, and Bolton approaching, paused within a few feet of them. His eyes were bent upon the ground, and his face was grave and pale.

He was a handsome man. Six and twenty, of more than medium height, and rather spare of form, with dark hair, a broad forehead, and good features. The face indicated a nervous energy which made it at once attractive and dignified. A black mustache covered the upper lip, half-obscuring the firm lines of the mouth.

"What a melancholy Jacques roaming through Arden," whispered Alice.

Bolton sighed. "A year has passed," he thought, "but the wound still hurts. What weak creatures are we men to have our happiness hang upon a school-girl's whim. But a life unsmoothed by woman's loving hand must ever be lonely and desolate."

He was walking onward.

Alice said, softly, "Call him back, Janet. How sad he looks."

"Mr. Bolton—hey," cried Janet at the top of her voice, "hold up!"

Bolton turned, and seeing the young women, retraced his steps.

"Miss Crivet," he said, removing his hat, "we have not met for a long time. And Janet, you are a still greater stranger. Is it possible that you, Miss Crivet, like myself, seek consolation in these sunlit glades?"

"Alas, no," returned Alice with mock seriousness. "My heart, unfortunately, is so devoid of a history, that I have never learned the need of consolation. But I have a surprise for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, a letter from my cousin Stephanie."

Bolton siezed the letter, tore off the envelope hastily, and without begging permission, began to read; whilst Alice drew Janet to their retreat behind the sycamore that he might feel no embarrassment from their presence.

CHAPTER V.

SCRAPS OF FAMILY HISTORY.

As Bolton reads Stephanie's letter, beyond him come two odd-looking persons. The elder is a man of fifty, short, and stoutly built. His frame is stooped, he is lame, and uses a cane in walking. A mass of matted hair, dark, but of gray tint, is seen beneath a hat of rusty black. His face is very red, and wears a look of cunning, and yet it is withal an honest and open face—one that you would trust. He wears no beard save a thin fringe of red hair under the chin. His clothes are plain, but not mean. His coat of brown jean has the "swallow-tail" cut of the English butler. His shirt is of blue flannel, tied at the neck with a black ribbon. His trousers are of corduroy and stop at the knee, where they are met by a pair of calf-skin boots. This is Tony Grog, a loyal subject of the queen of England. He is accompanied by his son, Richard Bosworth Grog, a youth who is rapidly going out of his teens. Dick is tall, slim and angular, dressed after the style of his parent, and yet with a palpable attempt at originality. He is walking in front

of his father, and turns suddenly upon hearing an exclamation from the old man.

"There goes my leg!" cried Tony, falling to the ground in a graceless heap; "Floored, by gad!"

"Has your leg gave out?" asked Richard, carelessly.

"I should say," replied Tony. "To have a Byronic leg, my son, is hevidence of genius, but its werry uncomfortable. I wish we were out of this blarsted land of freedom and safe in merry England!"

"I'd like to go back, too," said Richard, in a far-away tone. "I don't see the good of our master gadding us all hover America just to give money to a stranger which he might keep for himself—or give to us."

The elder Grog looked up with instant severity.

"Richard Bosworth Grog," said he, "you are a hunmitigated disgrace to your name. Old Kean would never have died so splendid in Richard III, had he heard you, whom I named arter him, speak such sentiments as that be. No, Dick," said Mr. Grog, in a quieter voice, "our young master should find his brother, and give him what's his own, or bust his earthly boiler in the attempt."

Richard, paying no attention whatever to this homily, had been peering earnestly through the trees, and now exclaimed,

"Will you look, old man!"

"At what, my boy?" asked Tony, turning his eyes in the direction indicated by Dick's glance, and seeing our three friends.

"Ha!" he said, moving himself for the first time since he had fallen. "Wonder who they be?"

"Dunno," replied Dick. "One of them seems to be telling the feller something about the letter he holds."

"Yon picture of rooral hinnocence brings back my early days," said Tony, pensively, "when life was green and so was I. I once loved."

"Did the flame twin?" asked Richard, inelegantly.

"Aye. But a stern fate as hexecuted by her parent, prevented two young 'earts from singing the same note of joy."

Dick lost his interest in Bolton's party, and seated himself at Tony's side.

"Was the parent victorious?" he asked.

"Never! One moonlight night we were secretly married. Arter that I followed Master Edwin to India. When you arrived, my boy, her parent died of apoplexy a scolding of you."

Tony always said "her parent," as if the poor thing had never possessed but one of those somewhat essential relatives.

"But I loved her till the last," he continued, "till she busted her earthly boiler and left for that place where hobnoxious parents cannot enter."

Mr. Grog drew from his pocket a red handkerchief which might, in an emergency, so large was it, have served for a national flag, and, affected by his melancholy reminiscences, wiped his eyes and blew a bugle blast through his nose.

"This is a history, Richard Bosworth, which nothing but a heavy 'eart and a rheumatic leg could ever dig out of my bosom."

Master Richard ruminated upon this narrative, which was hitherto unknown to him, for only a moment. Springing to his feet, with a look of pleasure suffusing his face, he cried, exultantly:

"I never knew I was a sprig of love afore. The old man died a scoldin' me—me, who was most likely only chewin' my thumb! I'll cock my hat an inch higher! A sprig of love," he continued, more and more pleased as the full romance of the story dawned upon him. "Old man, they ought to put me in a book!"

"But I've had enough of these woods," said Tony, rising with difficulty; "they wake up the memories o' the ancient past. Let's go back to the town."

As they turned to leave the scene, Bolton and the two young women approached.

"What a funny old man!" cried Janet. "Whatever can be the matter with his leg?"

Tony overheard the remark, and, straightening himself up, replied:

"Young woman, I fit into the Crimean war, and am honorably lame. I made the charge 'longside the colonel of our regiment, and we was both shot in the same leg. They cut his off, and the rheumatism has etarnally blarsted mine."

Bolton, seeing that Alice was amused, and wishing to hear more of the man's talk, now addressed him

"My friend," said he, "your accent proclaims you an Englishman."

"My accent does not prewaricate, sir," replied Tony. "I am a subject of Her Majesty, whom the Lord bless!"

"And travelling in this country for pleasure?" asked Alice.

"No, miss; I am here in search of a strayed young gentleman."

"Why, here is a romance!" cried Bolton.

"Well, ladies, and you, sir," Tony began, "'tis a long story, but I'll tell it, if ye have patience to listen. Many

years ago I entered the service of Sir Horace Osborne, a wild young fellow who was coming into a big fortune on the death o' his uncle. Before that event came about, Sir Horace married a poor governess, with whom he came to America, and here resided until the birth of a son. About this time he was recalled to England by the death o' his uncle, and then discovered, to his 'orror, that he was to be disinherited unless he would marry a lady of title which his uncle had selected. His love for the lucre was stronger than his love for his wife and baby—he married the Lady Flora!"

"Oh, the bigamy!" cried Janet.

"He came into the estate," continued Tony, "and another son, Edwin, was born to him. Lady Flora died, and Edwin, arter going to school, henlisted in the army and went to India. While he was there, his father, Sir Horace, took sick and died; but before he quite hexpired he called me to his bedside. 'Tony,' says he, 'you've always been a faithful servant.' 'Yes, sir,' says I. 'You are the only one who knows the secret o' my life—the only one I can trust,' says he; 'I am on my death-bed,' says he. 'You are jokin',' says I, to comfort him. 'No,' says he, 'and I am in sore distress. Here is a letter for Edwin, in which I have told him the whole story, and

have directed him to go to America to search for the poor creatures whom I have so cruelly deserted.'"

"Ha," cried Bolton, "a dark despair sat on his soul."

"No, sir," answered Tony, quickly; "nothing didn't sit on his soul, 'cause I was there to see. 'Tony,' continued Sir Horace, 'at my death half my estate will revert to Edwin. My wife is long since dead, but I have told him to find my boy. Go you with him and 'elp in the search. When he is found, he receives five thousand pounds a year.' Then he gave me a letter for his lost boy —and died."

"I certainly wish that you may be successful in your search. If I can aid you, call upon me. Here is my card."

Tony placed the card in his pocket. "I will give it to Mr. Osborne," he said; "he is with us at the 'otel. Where be Dick? Richard!" he cried, spying his offspring, who had wandered away, "come and help me! This Byronic leg will bring me to a huntimely end!"

So saying, the two Englishmen walked off towards Bucksport, leaving Bolton, with Alice and Janet, to follow by another path.

CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER.

LEAVING Janet at the Plodgers' homestead, Bolton and Alice walked leisurely toward the home of the latter; and as they proceed we will take the author's liberty of reading the letter which the young man had placed so carefully in his pocket:

"WASHINGTON, D. C., *December*, 18 —.

"MY FRIEND: I feel that the time has come for me to answer a question which was only partially answered a year ago. On the day of our last interview, shortly before you spoke to me, I was rash enough to humor my father with a promise that, if he should be elected, I would marry no one but a congressman without his consent. It was thoughtless—it was wrong—to make such an engagement, even with my father. But, having made it, 'twere unfilial to disregard it. When you came to me the second time, I could say nothing—could explain nothing. Nor can I now, though I began my letter for that purpose. In my sorrow and despair, I can only hope that you have not imputed to me any unworthy motive.

We were children together. Until the occurrence of this unfortunate affair I felt free to pour out to you, almost without restraint, the secrets of my heart. Then do not judge me harshly! Oh, do not, for I tell you that our Congress, rich in wealth and intellect though it be, does not *yet* contain the man whom my heart can approve as the one to save me from my rash promise. STEPHANIE PLODGERS."

The word "yet" was emphatic. Bolton had fancied

he could read a meaning between the lines, and he was pondering on the letter when they arrived home.

"Miss Crivet," he said, as he seated himself in the cosy sitting-room, "I have done your cousin a great wrong."

"In what way?"

"You know something of what is past. Well, her letter convinces me that I have misconstrued her motives. And shall such a promise," he asked, abstractedly, "blight our two lives forever?"

Alice looked at him searchingly for a moment, and then replied, with teasing deliberation:

"Yes—unless you yourself can obviate that promise."

Bolton looked up quickly.

"How is that possible?"

"Listen. Stephanie has promised not to marry anybody but a congressman. Why are you not one?"

Bolton was startled, and rose to his feet, a radiant hope lighting up his face as of old.

"When a woman advocates the cause of love, obstructions vanish into air," he exclaimed. "Why, indeed, should I not be a congressman?"

"I like your vim," she said, walking to the window. "If the women could only vote!"

"Though it sounds both ungallant and ungrateful for

me to say so," he said, "I am glad that they cannot."

"They might assist your own election."

"Any office would be distasteful obtained by what I should regard as the sacrifice of true womanhood."

"In what way?"

"If all women were as good as yourself, the men who would reach success through their votes would most likely be patterns of the best manhood. But the suffrage would extend to the bad as well as to the good. On election day modest women would stay at home, while only the bold, the ignorant and the degraded would use the privilege."

"Oh, tyrant man!" cried Alice, loftily, "with what bad logic ye sustain your usurpation! But man's slaves we have been since the world began, and will be until it ends. Of course, there is a certain masculine growth of women which will always cry for the overthrow of the tyrant; but these, somehow, men do not choose for wives."

"It is not because women are less capable than men, that these privileges are withheld from them," said Bolton. "They are often the equals of men in intellectual power, while in moral force the best women are superior to the best men; and all means for the development of these

faculties should be made available to them. Education should aim to lift reason to a higher plane and enlarge the scope of individual usefulness, both for women and men. But education of the head and heart must be co-extensive. That system of instruction which provides only for the expansion of the mental faculties is defective and dangerous. Tyranny, and all the oppressions of society, in every age, are largely due to the ambition of merely intellectual men, who have been unguided by a sufficient sense of their moral obligations. But if, on the other hand, the heart receives the more careful training, the tendency is to overcast the mind with intolerance and superstition. If an equal education of head and heart were universally established, the standard of intelligence would be higher, while the motives and purposes of men and women would be better and purer."

"That was largely the nature of Stephanie's education," responded Alice fervently. "She is a dear, good girl, and her heart and intellect are what you have described. But there!" she exclaimed, as her eyes sought the window, "we had nearly forgotten our politics, and permitted Tom Blinks to slip by. Since you disdain the aid of woman, he is your next best help."

"He certainly is the very man in a strait like this,"

said Bolton, stepping to the door. "May I call him in?"

Blinks crossed the street, and entered the house.

"Hello, Bolton, my boy," cried the bland politician as he swaggered into the room. "Miss, I hope I see you blooming—like the flowers, ma'am. This is a fine morning!"

Bolton at once began to talk of the plan he had formed.

"Mr. Blinks, I will tell you my business briefly—I desire to run for Congress in the next election."

Blinks threw his hat back upon his head, thrust his hands in his pockets, and whistled. "That's modest," he said; "what put politics in your head?"

"A powerful and immortal agent," answered Bolton, coloring; and Alice, enjoying his confusion, whispered, "Cupid."

"I would have your assistance," continued Bolton. "Will you help me?"

"I dunno," responded Blinks, doubtfully; "I am known to be a Plodgers man. But a good reason for it"—he drew nearer—"a financial reason, Bolton, would, perhaps, slacken my zeal in behalf of Plodgers. Now, you couldn't lend me five hundred dollars, could you, Bolton?—just to pay election expenses, you know."

"That is a large sum," answered Bolton; "but—pshaw!—I will pay it to you"—he paused. The full sense of his impecunious condition suddenly flashed upon him, and his project seemed paralyzed at the start. "Oh, wretched, wretched poverty!" he thought, "I have not a hundred—I have not ten dollars in the world!"

Alice, divining his hesitation, stepped forward quickly, fearful lest the plan which a moment ago had looked so bright, would be abandoned

"Say nothing to-day," she counselled; "arrange a meeting for to-morrow morning, and you can then perhaps agree upon the details of this affair. Can you not meet at Great Rocks?"

"I will be there—I am going hunting to-morrow," said Blinks. "Adoo." He walked out unceremoniously, having not a care in the world, save to keep on the winning side in politics.

"Miss Crivet," said Bolton, who had recovered his composure, and now spoke with energy, "circumstances appear to have combined against me; but for her dear sake I will conquer all, and win! Until to-morrow, farewell."

CHAPTER VII.

A DISCOVERY.

Tony Grog, leaving our friends in the woods, proceeded with a halting and weary step towards Bucksport, intending to rest his shattered leg, and in a deep potation from the flowing bowl, dispel the melancholy memories that had come upon him in his morning walk. Richard Bosworth walked behind him in a mechanical fashion, a creature of dreams. Dick's head had been completely turned by the recital of the romantic story of his birth, and his imagination was running into all sorts of complicated plots of which he was the hero. The offspring of a fond, but secret love! the subject, for a season, of much gossip, whose advent threw his mother's one parent into a frightful and fatal rage! These were thoughts which flashed through Dick's brain, and swelled him into an important personage, until it suddenly occurred to him to ask himself the question, "But suppose the old feller 'ad squeezed my windpipe? 'Orrible thought! The curtain would a fell on the first act."

Arrived in the town, the two entered the hotel, and

while Dick proceeded to tell his story to one of the porters, his father proceeded up-stairs, and stopped in front of a room, upon the door of which he gave a loud knock. A masculine voice responded "Come in," and Tony obeyed.

The door opened into a suite of rooms, consisting of parlor and sleeping apartment—apparently the best in the house. Comfortably seated in the former room, with his slippered feet upon the back of a chair, a cigar in his mouth and a newspaper upon his knee, was Edwin Osborne, a handsome Englishman of four and twenty.

"Well, Grog," he cried, impatiently, "you were gone an age."

"I hobtained no news to hurry me back, Master Edwin," replied Tony, "and—"

"Cease using that idiotic 'Master Edwin,'" interrupted the youth. "Call me Mr. Osborne; I am no longer at school."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Osborne. I have called you Master Edwin for so many years that it be hard to use the other name. Well, Dick and me went to the office of the young lawyer you named—Mr. Bolton—but he were not there."

"And did it take you all this time to come and tell me so?"

"No, sir; it be such a fine day that we strolled off to the woods, where my blarsted leg floored me and I could not hurry 'ome."

The young man kept his eyes upon his paper for a moment; then, relaxing the sternness of his manner, he said:

"Be seated, Tony. Now, my man, I don't mind telling you that I am on my brother's track, and that I expect to find him shortly."

Tony's humble silence vanished instantly, and he rose to his feet.

"What say you, Mr. Edwin?" he cried, forgetting, in the excitement of his pleasure, the reproof which this form of address had won for him but a moment before. "Be my dear dead master's son about to be found? Oh, where is Dick to hembrace me? I could a'most hurrah for the blarsted bird of Freedom! Mr. Edwin, I am—" Tony was quite overcome, physically as well as mentally, and, as he toppled over, the sentence ended abruptly with "Floored, by gad!"

Osborne laughed heartily at his prostrate follower. "Grog," said he, "that's a great leg of yours. 'Twould have been better if the cannon ball had taken it clear off, then you could have worn a wooden one. Well, what adventures did you have this morning? Come, tell me a

startling tale, Tony. I am wearied to death with nothing!'

The old man gathered himself up slowly, and, after rubbing his maimed limb the while, he told Osborne of his meeting with three strangers in the wood, and of the interest which they displayed in his story.

"You couldn't keep that from them, I'll warrant," exclaimed Osborne. "If that narrative could hang a man, you long since had sent me to the gallows. Well, what was the name of the inquisitive fellow who asked you so many questions?"

"He gave me his card, which I didn't read; my eyes are dim, you know, and Dick be no scholar. But here be the card, sir."

Osborne read it and gave a great start; but controlling himself by an effort, he asked:

"Who gave you this?"

"A very proper gentleman," answered Grog; "rather slim bulk, but straight and manly, and a voice as sounds as true as a sixpence."

"And what was his bearing towards the two women?"

"They were ladies, Mr. Osborne—at least one of 'em was. T'other one was a servant, though she seemed to think herself e'kal to the best—as everybody does in this

land of freedom! The young man was most respectful to both."

Osborne approached, and looked his servant in the face.

"Tony, that man is my brother!"

Tony, thunderstruck, attempted to rise, but remembering his former mishap, he sank back into his chair, and stared in a dazed way at his young master.

"Mr. Edwin," said he solemnly, after a long silence, "the Lord be praised!"

Osborne folded his arms and paced nervously up and down the room. After a year's search he saw his mission about to be fulfilled. Was he pleased with the prospect? He strove to feel that he was. But Osborne was only human, and it gave his heart a pang to think that he must soon give half his wealth to one whom he had never seen.

"Grog," said he, stopping suddenly in front of Tony, "a train will leave for the East in one hour. Take Dick and go to Washington. You both have long tongues, and I wish to keep this matter secret for the present. Remain at our quarters there until you hear from me. Have you any money?"

"Yes, but, Mr. Edwin—"

"Well, then, be off; the train will not wait."

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO BROTHERS.

Bolton spent a sleepless night. Plan after plan was carefully considered, adopted and then abandoned. He could think of no way to overcome his difficulty. He arose from his bed to read Stephanie's letter. "Do not judge me harshly," it said; "for I tell you that our Congress, rich in wealth and intellect though it be, does not *yet* contain the man whom my heart can approve as the one to save me from my rash promise." The meaning of this sentence dawned upon him. Once elected to the National Legislature, every immediate obstacle to his union with Stephanie would vanish. The only district, however, in which he could hope for success, was that of Bucksport, the place of his residence for so many years. But Stephanie's father represented Bucksport; and it was well known that he desired and expected to be returned at the close of his present term. Would it not be most audacious to attempt to win the daughter's hand at the expense of the father's political hopes? Yes; but the very audacity of the thought captivated Bolton. It would be

a double triumph to meet the promise in this way. He would throw all his manhood and energy and love into the struggle. Stephanie would sympathize with him, and he felt that, supported in such a way, he would surely succeed.

But then—the five hundred dollars? where could he get so much? That sum might secure to him Blinks, the nomination and the election. Without it his case was hopeless. This thought kept him in feverish excitement until the dawn of morning called him from bed.

Long before the hour of meeting, Bolton was sauntering through the woods, visiting the old nooks that Stephanie and he had explored together a hundred times. Great Rocks took its name from two giant pillar-like stones, which rose bare and rugged on either side of a ravine, and faced each other in solemn grandeur. The thick foliage of the trees threw a dark shade down the dell. On one side was a log on which Stephanie used to sit while Bolton, reclining on the grass at her feet, would read to her. On the occasion of their last walk here, she had climbed upon the fallen tree, holding in her hand her straw hat, and she and Bolton were as happy as the breezes that played with her waving hair. He recalled the memories of that day; thought how he had once low-

ered his voice, and told her he feared his heart was no longer his own; thought of the blue eyes that then sought the ground, of the blush that spread over the fair face. His bosom swelled with emotion, and turning suddenly to continue his walk, he came into forcible contact with a young man who had approached him unseen.

"The devil!" cried the stranger.

"I beg his pardon," said Bolton.

"Your motions are abrupt," said Osborne—for he it was.

"They *are* somewhat out of shape—like your words," retorted Bolton.

Osborne laughed. "We are a congenially uncivil pair," he said. "If you will not quarrel with me I should like to join your walk, for I am a stranger, and have lost the compass in these woods."

Bolton said "Certainly," and the two walked in silence for some moments.

Osborne thought "this fellow is as melancholy as the sphynx!"

Bolton continued wrapt in his meditations until Osborne asked:

"Do you know the Hon. Horatio Plodgels, of this place?"

Bolton's interest was aroused.

"Yes."

"Perhaps you also know a young man—one Bolton—who was raised in his family!"

"Tolerably well," replied Bolton, "I am he."

His eyes were fixed upon the path in front of him, or he would have observed the start which his companion gave upon hearing this avowal. Osborne instantly mastered his feelings, and said carelessly, "You are a lawyer, I think?"

"Yes."

Another long silence.

"Perhaps you will tell me your name!" said Bolton, at length.

"Edwin Osborne."

"I heard that name yesterday."

"From Tony Grog?"

"Yes—he told me a romantic story in connection with the name. Have you any trace of your brother?"

"I can place my hand on him to-day."

"That must be a happy assurance?"

"It will be a happy one for him. He gets half my wealth, by Jove!"

Bolton perceived that selfishness and greed were strug-

gling for mastery over this man's feelings. He felt his heart strangely drawn toward Osborne by a chord of sympathy which was not common. Osborne, on the other hand, exhibited a nervousness of manner which, by his efforts to disguise it, was made only the more conspicuous.

"Bolton," he said, with assumed gaiety, "we have the day before us. Tell me something of the ways of life in this retired nook."

"We eat, drink and sleep, like the rest of the world," answered Bolton, "and some of us have ambition of a humble kind. For instance, I myself have lately conceived aspirations for congressional honors."

"Do men so young sit in your Congress?"

"Occasionally. But you should not object; one of your statesmen was prime minister at twenty-four."

"I do not object, man! If I cared for politics I should love your American system. It is a mongrel affair, but it gives to every man an equal chance, in proportion to his merit, as does your social life. To be sure, your class distinctions, in their way, are as strict as—eh—those of our blooded aristocracy; but in your system, money and worth will gain for any man what, in ours, only hereditary conditions bestow. I like a country where energy and merit can reach the top without cutting a vein to show that the gore is blue."

"Your admiration upon that point meets my own," rejoined Bolton; "but there is much corruption and abuse —especially in our elections; and the two great parties of the country, as now constituted, have certain profane elements, whose unworthiness is not atoned by their ability to increase majorities. One of the parties once represented the best ideas of popular government, but it now retains but few of the principles which called it into existence. It embraces a reprehensible element in an illiterate foreign class, who are mostly unable to read or write, and are always unfamiliar with our laws and customs, and who yet have a large voice in the councils of the party, and, indeed, very often override the true interests of those who 'are native here and to the manor born.'"

"I would surmise, then," Osborne observed, naively, "that if you do go to Congress, it will not be upon the ticket of this party?"

"Hardly," answered Bolton, smiling. "The other party I am of course bound to uphold—though I might pick some flaws in it, if so inclined. However, its achievements in past years will fill a brilliant chapter in history. It has destroyed slavery at a cost of lives, and by the endurance of horrors and trials, which have amply proved its

stable qualities; and it is now promoting the commercial prosperity of the country by a policy that has won the popular confidence."

"Have you a third party?"

"None that deserves the designation. *We have a restless, ignorant set of men—*de profundis*—which is an excrescence upon our political system. Their motives are basely selfish. Sometimes they are swayed by a desire for money, which they have not the capacity to earn; sometimes by a love of power; and sometimes by an undefined idea of agrarianism. They call themselves by various names; but they present their claims in a manner which repels rather than invites the sympathy and support of respectable men."

"Well," said Osborne, who had been an interested listener, "you speak like a man of parts, whatever may be the justice of your views, and I hope you may win the fight. What is your motive?"

It was Bolton's turn to be confused, but the impression made upon him by his companion was so favorable that he at last told him in part the story of the promise, care-

*NOTE.—The Independent party is still (1882) considered as only a protesting section of the great Republican party, from which it can never be permanently allowed to depart.—S. H. C.

fully avoiding any allusion that would be calculated to suggest the identity of Stephanie. When he came to mention his engagement for that morning with Tom Blinks, he paused in his narrative, unwilling to confess the indigence of his condition. He had told enough, however, for Osborne to readily surmise the cause of his embarrassment, and the Englishman began to turn over in his mind a plan which would relieve his brother's necessities without involving any risk of the discovery of his own connection with it. This idea was, to see Tom Blinks, pay him the five hundred dollars which he had demanded, and thus secure his influence for the young candidate.

A gun-shot was heard. "That is Tom Blinks, probably," said Bolton. "He said he was going hunting this morning."

"I will try to find him for you," cried Osborne, eagerly, and, without waiting for a reply, he disappeared among the trees, in the direction of the sound which they had heard.

"A singular fellow," thought Bolton. "He seems already nearly as much interested in this affair as I am. "Why, Miss Crivet," he said, as Alice approached, with Janet in attendance, as upon the previous day, "already abroad, and the dew is hardly dry upon the grass!"

"Oh, I have been up for hours," she said, gaily, "and am come here through an ancient and abundant curiosity to learn how you succeed."

"I made a new acquaintance this morning—an interesting young man, who left me abruptly but a moment ago upon hearing of a gun-shot."

"How romantic!" sighed Janet; and when Bolton described his meeting with Osborne, and told them of the lively interest which his political aspirations had aroused in the young man, she said: "A prince in disguise! He will touch Mr. Plodgers with a magic wand and put him to sleep until after the election, so that you will win!"

"But there he is; judge for yourselves," said Bolton. "He has found Tom Blinks and is bringing him here—but they come like snails."

In the distance Osborne and Blinks were approaching, apparently in deep conversation. Blinks carried a gun, and a bag of game was swinging by his side. His attention seemed to be held upon a point which the young Englishman was explaining, and they did not display any haste in joining Bolton. But their steps soon brought them so near that Osborne was heard to say:

"Do not ask me why, nor say anything to him about

it; but do the best you can, and call upon me as often as it may be necessary."

"Blinks, you and Mr. Osborne get on well enough for a first meeting, certainly," said Bolton, as he stepped forward to meet them and shook the hand of the wily politician. "Now, what have you to tell me about my plan?"

"Well," Blinks answered, with an air of deliberation, "I have thought it over, Bolton, and may have placed my estimate of the cost of the thing too high. My game is this: I'll help you to make this fight against Plodgers, will pay the expenses myself, and charge it up to you, with fair interest, after the election."

"That will be six months—agreed! I can raise the money easily in that time. But you will want an instalment to begin upon?"

"No, I don't—no hurry about it. Plodgers, of late, has been so slow in paying me that I have learned to live on hope. I'll do as much for you as for him, and there's my hand on it."

Bolton was not entirely deceived by this exhibition of generosity, though the reason for Blinks' change of manner was not apparent. Nevertheless, he was glad to accept the proffered aid, and gave his hand frankly to

Blinks in token of his good faith, after which he rejoined Alice, and introduced his new acquaiutance, Edwin Osborne.

"Now, friends," said Bolton, jocularly, "as a candidate for Congress, I will try to win your votes by inviting you to dinner. Will you all join me?"

"Why not have it here in the woods?" asked Alice.

"How romantic!" cried Janet.

"But there is nothing here but herbs," objected their host.

Tom Blinks volunteered to procure a dinner, and after saying something aside to Bolton, and receiving an assenting nod, he hurried away in the direction of Bucksport. Osborne, who was not averse to an exchange of badinage with Janet, amused himself and pleased her by his compliments; whilst Alice confided to Bolton her intention to visit her cousin Stephanie shortly.

"If you ever see a congressman in their house," said Bolton, as Stephanie's promise recurred to him, "unless it be Mr. Plodgers himself, you will oblige me by placing *arsenic* in his coffee!"

"But suppose you should be elected, and I see a congressman there in your own person—shall I place arsenic in your coffee?"

"In that case sugar will answer. But look! Here comes Tom Blinks, with the whole town, male and female, following him!"

It appeared to be true. Blinks was followed by a score of young men and women, who were all approaching in the best humor and with noisy laughter.

"And beyond the rabble," said Osborne, coming up," is a wagon load of provisions."

"It's surely a murder," cried Janet; "how romantic!"

But it was not a murder. Bolton's new lieutenant was simply effecting a stroke of diplomacy in the interest of his candidate. As Blinks proceeded through Bucksport, he had pressed some of the young men to get their sweethearts and join Mr. Bolton at a picnic—an invitation which they accepted with so much alacrity, that they were ready to follow him against the time he had purchased his supplies for the dinner.

As this army of hungry persons came within hearing distance of our friends, Tom Blinks stepped forward and delivered a speech, which he addressed to Bolton, in which he announced that these were a few of the legion of his friends, who had come to shake his hand and accept his hospitality. "Boys and girls," he continued, turning to his followers, "Mr. Bolton is one of that sort of men

who share their last penny with a friend—so make yourselves at home at his expense!"

Bolton was surprised at the number of the crowd, and felt disposed to resent the liberty Blinks had taken. But he received the young people gracefully, and after an exchange of compliments, music was furnished, and the townspeople engaged in a dance, Tom Blinks and Janet leading off. It was truly a pretty sight. They all tripped nimbly over the greensward, keeping good time with the music. The gay ribbons and light dresses were seen in changeful colors through the quick figures of the dance, and the merry laughter which burst forth at intervals, was a joyous accompaniment to the music.

"It looks like a scene from the old mythology," said Bolton, "where the nymphs and fauns seem to have assembled under the greenwood trees, to renew the pleasures of the past."

The music ceased, and the dancers wandered off through the forest in well assorted couples, until Tom Blinks called them together to partake of a dinner which they thought, in their hunger, was the best that had ever been prepared in Bucksport.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING RECEPTION.

It was May, and the Washington season was far advanced, but there was no indication of an early adjournment of Congress. The Hon. Horatio Plodgers was greatly annoyed by the delay. He had recently paid a flying visit to his home, and from what he saw of the state of public feeling in Bucksport, his hopes of a re-election were not encouraged. There were also many other things which were calculated to disturb his complacency, and he was consequently not in the best humor. The expenses of living at the capital were very heavy. He had furnished a large house rather elegantly and with fair taste; and a series of receptions which he had given, had won him some respect as an eccentric, but pleasant host. Besides, he had invested in several speculations, which had failed disastrously, and these continued depletions of his revenue at last forced him to mortgage his Bucksport property. As his means diminished, the demands upon his resources increased until, from his stringent situation, it occurred to him that public position and

social success were, perhaps, after all, delusive and dangerous.

Mrs. Plodgers, though not fitted by her former training for the station which she now occupied, had, notwithstanding, by her good nature and large-heartedness, won the liking of many whom she met in society. She was honest and motherly, and entirely free from affectation. But she had long since perceived the danger incurred by her husband's system of domestic economy, and longed for the quiet life which they had relinquished.

But there was one member of his family to whose personal graces and charming manners Mr. Plodgers owed a large share of the consideration which he received. This was Stephanie. Her intelligence and conversational powers made her an involuntary leader in society, while her modesty and gentle disposition touched a deep chord in many hearts. She strove to avoid any offer of marriage, however, and felt that she had schooled herself to be contented with single life, for she considered the question as between herself and Bolton ended, and the thought of being wedded to another filled her with repugnance.

One Tuesday evening the Plodger's parlors were filled with a select body of Washington society. Among the guests were the Secretary of War, two senators, a dozen

congressmen with their wives and daughters, several officers of the army and navy, together with some newspaper correspondents, and others of the untitled few.

The dancing had ceased, and most of the company had gone to the dining-room, where the Hon. Horatio, seated at the head of the table, was an acceptable and genial host. Many of the younger guests, however, with Stephanie among them, remained in the parlors, and were promptly served. The by-play of polite society could not be observed under a more favorable opportunity. The secretary's wife alternately played upon the piano and listened to compliments from certain calculating *attaches* of her husband's department. A senator's daughter talked of the theatre and the dearth of talent upon the stage. A minister of the Gospel was discussing over his ice-cream, with a miss of eighteen, an iniquitous proposition that had been made in the House of Representatives to tax church property. Three ladies, no longer of youthful age, agreed that the gentlemen of to-day paid less attention to ladies than those of former years. Young men wearing single eye-glasses and clothes of the best fit, assumed conspicuous positions upon the floor and became the willing subjects of remark.

Stephanie was seated at a side-table, surrounded by a

circle of friends. She never looked more charming. Her flowing cream-silk dress was ornamented by a single rosebud; the only jewels she wore were her ear-drops and a ring; and in her soft beauty and quiet dignity she seemed a queen to those around her.

Young Mr. Peters had been telling them of his last flame, the young lady who had this time touched his heart having departed from the city without even leaving him a farewell. He was sure that in this person he had met his sister soul.

"Pshaw!" cried Ralston, "Peters finds his sister soul resident in a different personality three times a month."

"Perhaps he believes in the doctrine of Metemsychosis," suggested Harding.

"An uncomfortable belief for one who has so erratic an affinity," observed Ralston.

"Confess, though," said Peters, who took the quizzing good-naturedly, "does not every man have an affinity, and only one?"

All laughed, and Ralston whispered that his friend was quite young.

"I think that every man has *three* affinities," said Stephanie.

"Three!" cried Peters, aghast.

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Harding. "The assertion seems to me another term for fickleness."

"Explain, explain!" demanded Ralston. "You have uttered a grave charge, Miss Plodgers."

"Gentlemen," began Stephanie, gathering her ideas for the defense, "I find the argument unexpectedly thrown upon myself. Only a moment ago you were arrayed against poor Mr. Peters. I said that every man had three affinities—I meant, every man that is capable of strong friendships and possesses a fair intellect. The three are—the Platonic, the Ideal, and the Elective."

"Why, this is didactic!" cried Harding.

"What are their relations to each other and to him?" asked Peters, "and how do you reconcile the presence of three with the idea of constancy in our manly bosoms?"

"The Platonic," she continued, "may be found in either a gentleman or a lady. It means the best friend—in whom his heart can have full trust, and to whom he gives that affection which is purely intellectual. Hamlet had the idea in his mind when he said to Horatio: 'Since my sweet soul was mistress of her choice, and could of men distinguish her election, hath sealed thee to herself."

"Plato himself could not define it better," remarked Harding. "Now, the second—"

"Is the Ideal," said she. "This means young womanhood in its full and entire perfection. It comprises a rich fancy, an exalted mind and a pure heart, and he who wears enshrined in his soul the true ideal affinity should never go astray."

"A very Minerva!" cried Harding, and the others chorused "bravo!"

"The third is the Elective, or chosen—the one whom the heart finally approves as worthy of love. The Elective affinity should be sought deliberately, studied circumspectly and courted assiduously. With the Elective, in rare instances, may sometimes be found also the Platonic and the Ideal—three in one—and enviable is the man who is thus thrice blessed! But there, the music is playing and you all have engagements."

She arose, her fair face glowing with energy, and they left her reluctantly for less favored companions.

She stood for a moment in silence, and, turning, started in pleased surprise at sight of a young man who approached.

"Mr. Osborne," she said, cordially extending her hand, "your presence is a pleasure I had about despaired of for this evening."

"I returned only two hours since," he answered, "and

knew nothing of your invitation until then. This is my excuse for tardy attendance. But I have found my brother!"

"Mr. Osborne!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—my elder brother!" he answered, with a touch of bitterness; "upon whom I am commanded to bestow a fortune."

"I would consider that a precious privilege, sir."

"Yes, if you had not already yourself held the fortune; so would I."

"What is his condition? I trust it is not one that will militate against your congenial relationship."

"He has been well reared, and is thoroughly a man. I would be proud of him but for my avarice."

"That is wrong. Have you brought him to Washington? Is he here?"

"No, I left him in—but I am not to tell you where I left him! However, I will promise you a stupendous surprise some day. What a fine waltz—will you try it?"

"Excuse me, no," she replied; "wouldn't you rather look at them?"

Osborne entertained her by relating some of the incidents of his trip. He never appeared to advantage more than upon this evening. His dress was faultless and be-

coming; his face wore the ruddy glow of travel; he talked well, and having Stephanie so long to himself, he exerted his powers to the utmost to hold her interest. They had met often before his departure, and she had been favorably impressed with his manners; but while absent, he had written one or two notes to her, which breathed a warmer spirit than she would have wished, and they were left unanswered.

Their conversation this evening was of the most pleasant kind, and she was laughing at a droll adventure which he had narrated, when he said abruptly:

"I saw George Bolton."

"Where?" She colored instantly.

"In Bucksport; he is a rising citizen. He purposes"—Osborne stopped. She felt that his eyes were upon her, which served to increase her confusion.

"Oh," he said, angrily, "you told me that you had grown up with him, but I did not suspect that—that"—his voice trembled. "Miss Plodgers, can it be possible that this is the reason you have declined to hear me? Stephanie"—

She arose, provoked at his presumption.

"You forget, sir, that we are not alone, and that such language is, at any time, distasteful to me. Pray excuse

me—I have too long neglected my other guests."

The young man bit his lip in mortification. He saw that it was indiscreet and stupid to have again ventured upon this subject; but still more humiliating was the suspicion that his brother would be his successful rival. He must soon, he thought, relinquish to that brother a large portion of his estate. Must he also be compelled to see him in possession of Stephanie's love? This was overwhelming, and he determined that, despite his rebuff, he would make one more effort to gain her favor.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW ISSUE.

The next morning Mr. Plodgers arose late, and appeared at breakfast very cross. The reception the previous evening had added largely to an indebtedness which already far exceeded his available assets. His position was like that of the army which, after burning the bridges behind it, found a superior force in front. He could not retreat, and each step forward seemed to multiply his difficulties. Though seeking a re-election, sanguine as he was, he well knew that his public services were not regarded favorably in Bucksport, and that the indications were strongly against his success.

After a light breakfast, he entered the library in meditation.

"There is something wrong," said he; "I'll wager a canary-bird against an ostrich, that there is something wrong. Eighteen months in Congress, and fame comes not, and fortune flies. 'Tis only a rich man that can afford to sit in Congress. The office is a premium on wealth, not on merit, and sometimes a member has neither wealth

or merit—at least the newspapers say so. When I was elected, I had a faint, indistinct notion that I might some day reach a nomination for President"—after a moment's silence—"the notion is still faint and indistinct!"

Jimmie, the bell boy, brought in the mail. There were a half-dozen yellow envelopes, with an indefinable something in their appearance that indicated "bills payable;" also, a newspaper. Mr. Plodgers eyed the letters with suspicion.

"I will read the paper first," said he; and opening it he began to read over the headings of the different columns. "FOREIGN NEWS: PARLIAMENTARY CRISIS. WAR. FAMINE. BUCKSPORT: *Mass Meeting of Citizens: George Bolton Nominated for Congress.* Why, d—— it!" cried he, jumping up and knocking the table over, "this *is* news! Do they imagine that the ingrate, Bolton, can fill the position which *I* hold? What further does the vile sheet say?"

Seating himself again, he read as follows:

"Last evening, our enterprising young lawyer and fellow-citizen, George Bolton, was nominated for Congress from this district. If elected, he will undoubtedly give better satisfaction than the present wooden-headed incumbent has given."

"Wooden-headed incumbent," repeated Mr. Plodgers; "one might surmise that I had not paid my subscription

to this editor. But what can have suggested Congressional honors to Bolton?—an insane freak of vain youth! Let him wait until *my* party makes a nomination. Now, for my correspondence. Bills," he said, as he opened them one by one. "Bills, bills, bills! Ah, here is one from Tom Blinks. I must dispense with his further services."

He arose, and with hands behind him, paced the room.

"This nomination of Bolton's troubles me," he said to himself. "To meet it I must do something that will make a stir; something that will fill the broad eye of the public. I have it, I have it!" he cried aloud. "I will advocate the cause of Woman; I will be the prophet and high-priest of Woman's Rights! The question is coming to the top in American politics; it is bound to have a hearing before the people. Why should not I be its champion? Perhaps a wave of popularity will carry me into honor and power; Congress again, then the Senate, then—Oh! it is a glorious thing to be President!"

He rang the bell. "Jimmie, ask Miss Plodgers if she will be kind enough to attend me here," he said; and when Stephanie entered, he inquired with marked abruptness:

"My darling, do you remember the promise, which you gave me on the day of my election?"

He could ask the question with but one intention, and she instantly divined his meaning. The color fled from her face, and on the left cheek appeared the faint outline of two fingers—*ghost fingers;* a phenomenon which was apparent only when she was swayed by strong emotions.

"Papa," she answered, with forced calmness, "I do hope that you have not remembered that imprudent vow against me."

"Against you? No, Stephanie; but I have remembered it for your benefit—in order to help your advancement in society, and secure your establishment in domestic happiness. My daughter," he continued, placing his arm around her with real affection; "you cannot question my love for you, and I wish you could perceive that in striving to overcome your repugnance to marriage, I am moved only by my solicitude for your peace of mind."

"Is there no other motive?"

The look that came from the depths of her eyes forced him to avert his own. He proceeded, without seeming to notice her question:

"The Hon. Rashleigh Waldron is a rich and influential member. He is handsome and intelligent, and is unmar-

ried. He has promised to call next week. Stephanie, my wishes require no explanation. In your treatment of Mr. Waldron, I shall expect to see the same implicit obedience to parental authority which ever marked your childhood and youth. But I am already late for the House—my hat and gloves, please; good-bye daughter."

CHAPTER XI.

COUNTERPLOT.

Alice left Bucksport Monday night, and arrived in Washington for breakfast, Tuesday morning. When Mr. and Mrs. Plodgers had given her a cordial welcome, and asked the usual questions concerning her journey, Stephanie, who was impatiently awaiting her opportunity, took her upstairs, and at once began to explain her dilemma.

"And now, Alice," she said, "you see the strait that I am in. Papa is determined that I shall marry a congressman; and he thinks it ample concession that the congressman may be of my own choosing."

"Has any member offered himself?"

"No," she answered, laughing, "and it is that which gives the whole thing such a tragic ridiculousness. But he has spoken recently of the Hon. Rashleigh Waldron."

"What manner of man is he?"

"I have not seen him. I can only say that he is a bachelor—a very wealthy one, too. He was but recently elected, and dines here to-day."

Alice's eyes flashed with humor. "If he comes with an appetite for matrimony," she said, "he must be surfeited!"

"But how!"

"Listen, dear. He has never seen either of us; we will exchange names."

"I am in the dark, still."

"You will be Alice Crivet, and I will be Stephanie Plodgers. If the honorable gentleman has a preconceived affection for your name, he will, thinking that I am you, fall in love with me!"

"But papa being the matchmaker," urged Stephanie, "our plot is too bald."

"What!" cried Alice, her eyes flashing with fun; "let a man outwit a woman in an affair of the heart? Never!"

"Well, I will do my part. But Alice—"

"Well, what now?"

"Suppose Mr. Waldron *does* fall in love with you?"

Alice laughed again. "Why, I will—"

"What?"

"Reciprocate! But let us dress for dinner."

Meanwhile, the Hon. Horatio, communing with himself to pass the time, was waiting in the parlor for the arrival of his guest.

"Waldron is young, rich and influential," said he, meditatively—"three qualities in which, I'll wager a floating chip against a steamboat, he excels myself. He is looking for a wife, and if I can bring it around, Stephanie shall marry him, and he shall pay my debts!"

While his mind was in parturition with these thoughts, Mr. Rashleigh Waldron entered the room in advance of the servant who was about to announce him, and seized the hand of his host with the freedom that marked the younger politician.

"Delightful meeting, Mr. Plodgers. You look oblivious of all the cares of life. Mr. Plodgers, how *do* you do!"

All the while he had been vigorously shaking the hand he held; but Mr. Plodgers, with an eye free of emotion, looked at him with quiet benignance, and said simply,

"Waldron, sit down."

"Charming host you are, sir."

"How are things?" asked Mr. Plodgers.

"In my district, as full of promise as the star of Bethlehem. I am just returned by an overwhelming majority."

"I wish I could speak as cheerfully of mine," said Mr. Plodgers. "My mind is in great dubiosity concerning the result of the coming election in Bucksport."

"Who is the candidate of the opposition?"

"George Bolton," he responded, hotly. "A fellow whom I raised from poverty—who owes to me anything of worth that there is within him."

"Is he popular?"

"I fear it. I have given him little consideration so far, but when I take the stump—oh, I'll crush him!"

"Well, enough of politics," said Mr. Waldron. "I see it disturbs you; and I would rather talk upon a more tender subject. Sir, I occupy an honorable position, and have means to support it. But if I owned Creation, and woman was not there, like Adam would I pine!"

"Then, why are you not mated?"

Waldron hesitated a moment, and then replied:

"I have never met my ideal."

"Bah! you are visionary," cried Mr. Plodgers. "Ah, Mr. Waldron, many men of finer acumen owe their bachelorhood to this same reason more than to the unwillingness of women! What do you mean by ideal?"

"A child of my soul—a will-o'-the-wisp that lives in the air castles of my highest thoughts—an unborn conception of my fancy; in short, all that is spiritual, exalted, unutterable within me unite to form my ideal woman."

Mr. Plodgers could not at all understand this sentiment. "When I would read poetry," said he, "I can buy

a book full of it for a dollar and a half. Tell me in United States language what this wonderful female is like."

"Well," returned Waldron, "listen: She must be pretty."

"Yes."

"Clever—"

"Very good," assented Mr. Plodgers.

"Affectionate—"

"Of course."

"Fond of music and literature—"

"Stuff!"

"And a little lucre in the background completes the picture."

"A fine wife, that," said Mr. Plodgers; and then he added to himself, "Stephanie will answer his description, I think—except the background; I'll have to hoodwink him on that feature. But, excuse me," he continued, aloud, "and I will tell Mrs. Plodgers and the young ladies that you are here. It is now past three o'clock; we dine at four."

As he stepped out by one door, Alice, unaware of Waldron's presence, entered by the other. Seeing him, she paused.

"I am Mr. Waldron," he said, rising; "I presume that you are Miss Plodgers?"

"Oh, no—that is, yes!" she answered, and added to herself, "I had nearly forgotton our plot! How wicked I feel for that fib!"

"Young ladies often mean yes when they say no," said he, amused at her confusion.

"But never, sir, when they say it to a gentleman."

"Miss Plodgers, your father has just gone in search of you."

"My father? Alas, sir, he is dead!"

"Dead—no! I saw him in excellent health two minutes ago."

"I mean my cousin Stephanie's father—Alice's father—your father—" she stopped. "What a bad schemer I am!" she exclaimed, to herself. "Somebody's father, sir, is certainly dead!"

"'Tis not possible!" he answered, blankly.

To make matters worse, Stephanie, thinking that Alice had been introduced, and by this time had broken the ice, now appeared in the doorway. Alice's face turned crimson, but she attempted to carry out their plan of presenting her cousin under her own name, and again failed.

"Miss Plodgers, Mr. Waldron—I mean Miss Crivet, Mr. Plodgers!"

While they were bowing in response to this ludicrous introduction, Waldron observed mentally that the young lady who had entered first was either very awkward or very absent-minded. "But her confusion is interesting," he thought.

In order to relieve the embarrassment of the occasion, Alice asked him if he would be pleased to step upon the lawn and see her cousin's flowers. He would be charmed, he said; and together they passed through the open window into the garden.

Stephanie followed them with her eyes, and then fell a-musing.

"I am afraid," she thought, as she seated herself at the centre-table, and absently opened a book, "that the forgetfulness of Alice will soon disclose our plot."

She rang the bell and told Jimmie, who answered it, that she would not be at home to any callers.

"I wonder if papa would compel me to marry this gentleman?" she asked herself. "There is but one to whom I would, of my own volition, entrust my life and happiness. If George Bolton were only a congressman! But he is not—he is not—and it may so chance that we will never meet each other again."

She started to her feet.

"Never mind announcing me, Jimmie," she heard a manly voice exclaim, "Miss Plodgers will not require that formality."

"But, sir," Jimmie expostulated, "she is not at home —she told me a moment ago she was not at home!"

"Oh, yes, I am at home, Jimmie!" cried Stephanie, running forward; "I am, I am!"

Jimmie discreetly retired; and George Bolton, taking her hand and drawing her again into the library, caught her to his breast.

"My sweet girl!"

For one moment she resisted; and then, as their eyes met, she drew closer to him and her head rested upon his bosom.

"George, George!" she said, softly, in her glad love.

Each read the sweet secret that lay in the eyes of the other; each read forgiveness for all misunderstanding; and as he held her closely in his arms, it seemed to him that all the bitterness of the past was atoned by the joy of this meeting. For a long time her head, reaching barely to his shoulder, reposed there in the full trust of her affection; and when he murmured a word of soothing, she looked up, and received her first kiss.

"Tears, my darling!" he cried, "but they are tears of

joy, they sparkle like diamonds! There—I have kissed them all away!"

"Oh, I am so happy here," she said softly. "But tell me, George—will it last? Are you going to be successful in the election?"

"You are aware, then, of my plan?"

"Yes, through Alice—she is here, you know. Oh, I am sure you will succeed; you were always my hero, George."

"Stephanie," said he, caressing the fair head, "you have ever been my guardian angel. The influence of your character has imperceptibly drawn mine to a higher standard. My thoughts are better when you are present, and I almost think that your sweet faith has taken hold of my heart, also."

"I am overjoyed to hear you confess that, George; it encourages me to tell you something of myself." She looked up shyly.

He waited in silence, until she whispered something, and paused.

"But by what line of argument does your conscience persuade you that Church membership is necessary?" he asked.

"I think it is in religion as in the world—for every

benefit bestowed, there must be at least a partial return. If a man aspires to citizenship even in this free land of ours, he must first take the oath of allegiance. In the Church the act of citizenship is baptism. May I tell you the doctrine which I have made my own?"

As the earnest eyes sought his she saw he was listening closely.

"Before baptism comes, of course, faith. By faith we believe in God, in the inspiration of His word, in the divinity of Christ, in His atonement for our sins. Faith changes our minds, or our views of life. Repentance following, changes our hearts, or our manner of life. Then by baptism we have set the seal to our belief. This is all that is required of us, and in return we receive remission of sin, and the crowning glory of all, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is my religion."

"A clear exposition, Stephanie. You plainly have not taken the step without consideration."

"I do not regret it. It in no way detracts from my enjoyment or pleasure."

"Stephanie, I know that in this uncertain life there is nothing certain but death, and Christianity is all that can give death an aspect which men can look upon without despair. I know that outside of the Bible there is noth-

ing by which this repugnance against physical dissolution can be overcome. But then the dogmas with which the Church has fettered this system"—

"Oh, you have nothing to do with their dogmas," she interrupted pleasantly. "No dogma is inspired. You do not find them in the Bible; and the catechisms and creeds wherein you may find them, are fast going up to the top shelves in old libraries."

"I wish you would admit as much for certain portions of the Scriptures. Remember, Stephanie, that the Bible was written before the age of printing, and was hidden for centuries in monasteries where even its own anathemas did not deter certain priests and others from altering the text."

"Wrong again, George. For the first eight hundred years after Christ, the books of both the Old and New Testaments had the widest circulation among intelligent and honest Christians. Later, their circulation was confined largely to the priesthood, and as the outcome of that policy the people lapsed into illiteracy, and the dark ages ensued. But so many of the old copies remained—three of them in particular, the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the Sinaitic; and the allusions of the fathers of the Church concerning them, are so full, that it is impossible

for the substantial authority, veracity and integrity of the Bible to be successfully refuted."

Bolton began to perceive that the weight of the argument was against him. He made a last attempt to maintain his position.

"Would you hold for a moment," said he "that this passage 'He that believeth not shall be damned,' is an inspiration from the Father of Mercy?"

"There are some parts," she replied promptly, "whose value would not be in any way impaired by questioning their inspiration—as for instance some of the historical narrations, and descriptions of the old Jewish laws and customs. There is no need for their inspiration. But you will certainly not question that Isaiah was literally 'moved by the Holy Spirit' to have produced his prophesies of the Man of Sorrows. When Paul urged men not to marry, the injunction was confessedly from himself alone. But when he declared 'the dead shall be raised incorruptible,' who would be so dead to hope as to questian his inspiration."

"I well know," responded Bolton, "that the teachings of Christianity are founded upon the necessities of men. But the claims for Christ should be based upon the perfect character of his life rather than on his authority.

His authority is the conclusion to which his perfection should lead us—not his perfection the conclusion to which his authority should lead us. In this age men must be moved by love, and not by fear; and I wish you would permit me to class that malediction on the unbeliever in the same category with Paul's advice about marriage, and label them all *Not Inspired!*"

"George, I wish you would read Milton with me. His poetry spiritually elevates us by the glimpses which it gives through those doors that are closed on our sin-veiled eyes. In proportion as we seek after sublime things it seems to me that our natures must become more sublime, until we shall be better fitted for our other life."

Bolton folded her in his arms. "Stephanie," he said, "I have decried Christianity as not worthy of an unfettered reason, but you teach me that I am wrong. If men do not reach heaven through faith, they never will through reason. We *are* immortal. The mind, in which the spark of genius flashes restlessly, and intelligence and knowledge burn steadily—the mind can surely never die. You have taught me to think that before God reason must be silently and reverentially submissive. Dear girl, I have pledged you my love—take thou also my life; lead my footsteps as thou wilt, for I believe."

The fair head sank again upon his bosom. He pressed his lips upon her forehead, feeling in the union of their hearts the quiet gladness of perfect love.

CHAPTER XII.

BREAKERS.

A firm step was heard approaching; the door opened, and Mr. Plodgers entered the library. As his eye fell upon our friends, he stopped and stared at Bolton, who advanced with respectful mein and extended his hand. Mr. Plodgers barely touched it with his own fingers, and then stood in silence, waiting for the young man to speak.

"Mr. Plodgers," said Bolton, "my presence in your house, under the circumstances, must, I know, be anything but welcome to you."

"My doors are open to all, sir," answered Plodgers, in a tone that was anything but cordial. "What is this that I hear of your aspirations to my seat in Congress, sir?"

"The office belongs to the people, sir," replied Bolton, nettled by the coolness of his reception.

"Well, sir," said Plodgers, wrathfully, "I like to see a man in his proper station. Bucksport is *your* station. Stephanie, have you not guests to entertain?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, hurt by the indignity with

which her father had treated Bolton. "Mr. Bolton is our guest, father, and I have always thought that you delighted to honor anyone who held my friendship."

Bolton made a step towards her.

"Mr. Plodgers," he said, "you doubtless know something of my regard for your daughter, and it is to this alone that my opposition to your political course is due."

"I hear you, young man!" cried Mr. Plodgers, in a voice that would have frightened a less persistent lover from his purpose.

"I have spoken with Miss Plodgers, sir, and find that —that this feeling is returned. I beg you earnestly that she may withdraw her promise to you in respect to marriage, and that you will consent to her engagement to me."

Mr. Plodgers was not wholly unaware of the sentiment existing between his daughter and Bolton, and he had at one time given favorable contemplation to the prospect of their union; but being stubborn in the pursuit of anything upon which he had set his mind, he had long since determined not to permit any incident like the present one to overthrow his cherished plan of a marriage which would elevate his position in politics. If he

had for a moment realized the full effect of his resolution upon his daughter's happiness, it is questionable if he ever would have given it another thought; but in his egotism he was blind to any interest save his own. He was about to refuse Bolton's petition, in unmeasured terms, when Mrs. Plodgers entered the room, obviously in search of him.

"Horatio—" she began, and then exclaimed: "Why, George Bolton—goodness me—how pleased I am to see you—and true to Stephanie, I know! Bless your hearts!"

Bolton smiled gratefully.

"Mrs. Plodgers, you always were a mother to me."

"And if it were not for my ambitious husband, I would be a mother-in-law to you!—Stephanie, excuse me, dear; I won't say any more."

"Hold your tongue, madam!" cried Plodgers, incensed. "Young man, I say NO to your proposal; and in regard to your candidacy, I assure you at the start that your opposition will trouble me no more than—than—no more than the sting of a bumble bee would trouble a mighty lion!"

As our statesman said this, he placed his hat upon his head with an abundant energy that indicated disturbed

complacency, and walked from the room, out of the front door and into the street. There, a sportive blast of wind caught his hat and swept it a hundred feet away. "Hi, there!" cried Mr. Plodgers, giving chase. The hat continued its course down the street, the angry representative following in close pursuit. Occasionally he would gain upon it, and the hat would seem to stop for a moment; but just as he would stoop to seize it, a fresh blast of wind would snatch it again, and away it would go. People stopped to see the chase, and some small boys joined in the pursuit. Once an excited dog caught Mr. Plodgers by the leg, but he swept madly onward, only muttering an angry oath, until the runaway hat, crushed and covered with dust, was at last checked by an opposing barrel upon the pavement; whereupon he placed the unsightly thing on his head, and walked in a wrathy frame of mind to a stock-broker's to read the day's quotations.

He found a discouraging report there. He was unused to stock speculations, and his investments had not been well placed; and they all seemed to be turning out disastrously. The Nevada stocks had fallen twenty per cent., the B. & Y. thirty, and other smaller interests in which he had taken risks, had declined in the same proportion.

"Horatio Plodgers," he thought, as he walked home,

"you are an ass! There are twenty thousand dollars gone in wild-cat stocks. The outlook is terrific, very terrific. The sky is clouding, sir. Your establishment here has sunk ten thousand, and is still under a mortgage. Your Bucksport property will soon be foreclosed—your term will soon expire—all your available capital is used up. Now, sir—what are you going to do for your wife and child?"

With these gloomy reflections he entered his house, ill-prepared to entertain the guest whom he had invited to dine with him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAW INVOKED.

MEANWHILE, Stephanie was unfolding to Bolton the comedy which she and Alice were playing upon the unconscious Waldron. "But I am in despair," she said; "at dinner I fear all will be discovered."

"We will try to avert that," he replied. "But, Stephanie, I must tell you of a strange occurrence—a most mysterious affair, which I expect will lead to interesting developments." He then told her of his meeting in the woods a month before with Tony Grog, of the story of the lost heir, and of his belief that he himself was the oldest son of Sir Horace Osborne. "For," said he, "it was only last week that this man Grog returned to Bucksport and gave me one thousand pounds, which he said was mine, and that more would follow when a certain young man, who loved money too well, would let any more of it out of his clutches. I suspect that this must be an attorney who has got the estate into his hands, and is trying to retain a part for himself. However, Grog promised that all would be made clear soon, but would

tell me nothing definite at present, so I have deposited the money until I receive further information. But is it not encouraging, sweetheart, after all these years of speculation, to at least have the mystery unveiled?"

"I always felt that it would be," she answered, "but no circumstances of birth or fortune could change my hero."

"Flattery, my dear, must be rebuked—so there!"

"Audacious youth!"

"You won't chide me for stealing that one?"

"I suppose I must make up my mind to it," she said, with a shy laugh; "but here is papa!" and Mr. Plodgers entered.

"Stephanie, be kind enough to send Mr. Waldron here."

"Yes, papa," she replied, leaving the room, Bolton following, unmindful of an indignant stare from Plodgers.

In the hall she said, "George, our comedy will be unmasked!"

"We will hope not," he answered, pressing her hand; and they delivered the message to Waldron.

"Can you give me the happy assurance, sir," said Waldron, entering the library—"can you make me the happiest of men, by saying that your daughter's heart is free?"

"No doubt of it, no doubt of it," responded Mr. Plod-

gers, stifling the protests of his conscience. "I'll wager a big apple against a house and lot, that her affections are not engaged."

Mr. Waldron began to speak, but stammered and broke down. Trying again, he asked Mr. Plodgers—if he—would—have him for a—son-in-law. Mr. Plodgers seized his colleague's hands, and shook them warmly.

"Rashleigh," he said, with moist eyes, "I always did love you as a son!" (He had known Mr. Waldron a fortnight). "Sir, I am shedding tears of joy! I—I trust that you will excuse this ebullition, but—but, I am a fond parent!"

Mr. Plodgers' head sank upon Mr. Waldron's shoulder, and Mr. Waldron thought, "What a slimy old crocodile!"

When our representative recovered his self-possession, he said,

"But, Rashleigh, my daughter has just gone in search of you."

"Pardon me," answered Waldron, "but I have been in her society for the last hour."

"Ah, while I was away," said Mr. Plodgers, unaware of the success with which the plan arranged by the two young ladies was working. "Rejoin her, then, by all means."

"Cupid, wing thy shaft well!" cried Waldron, poetically, as he left the room.

Mr. Plodgers folded his arms and bowed his head in his usual contemplative manner.

"Waldron is rich," said he; "I am growing poor as fast as fate can make me, and I have reason to be anxious about our very home. This marriage will be a good one in many ways. Yes, I must marry Waldron—eh? —oh—of course—my daughter must marry him."

He went to the window and looked out upon the lawn.

"The devil!" he cried, "there are Stephanie and Bolten, arm in arm, and—what?—Rashleigh Waldron courting Alice Crivet, by the Lord! Another plan ruined! I say, Waldron, you are a double-faced man, sir—a bigamous rascal!" then added to himself, "How the villain jumped!"

"Is your name Plodgers?"

The discomfited and angry gentleman turned around and beheld a mite of a boy dressed in the regulation dress of a telegraph messenger, and who looked like a fat peanut in uniform. After thoroughly scanning this diminutive specimen of the *genus puer*, he replied, with impressive dignity:

"Honorable Horatio Plodgers, member of Congress from Bucksport, and the representative of a free and enlightened constituency—yes!"

"Well, I supppose he couldn't get all that on the envelope," said the boy; "here's a message for you, and eighty-five cents to pay, and manager said I was to collect before delivery."

Mr. Plodgers paid the money, and opened and read the message. When he had finished it his face turned pale, and his hand trembled so much that he dropped the telegram. He advanced a step as if to leave the room, then sank into a chair and groaned in anguish of spirit. The boy ran to the window and yelled "Police!" and Mr. Plodgers recovered sufficiently to go in search of his wife, as Bolton hastily entered. The messenger, who had taken up the dispatch, handed it to Bolton, who read as follows:

"BUCKSPORT, *June*, 18—.

"*To the* HON. HORATIO PLODGERS, *Washington:*

The mortgage upon your house, farm and chattels has been foreclosed, and the property will be sold at public auction on Thursday, 18th instant, at 9 A.M.

THOMAS CRUMP, *Sheriff.*"

"Is there an answer?" asked the boy.

"Yes; wait. I fear," he said to himself, "that Blinks has precipitated this sale in order to help me at the polls.

But, thank Heaven, I can readily repair the misfortune."

"George," cried Stephanie, entering the room while he was writing, her distress apparent only by the *ghost fingers* on her fair cheek, and by a slight quivering of the lips, "papa has just told me. Dear George. we are ruined!"

"Be calm, child," he answered, cheeringly. "Do you not know that I could pay the amount a hundred times? Read this."

Stephanie took the answer from his hand and read:

"*To* TONY GROG, *Bucksport:*

Attend Sheriff's sale Thursday, 18th inst., and purchase for me, in your own name, the property of Horatio Plodgers.

GEORGE BOLTON."

"Oh, Maria, Maria!" cried Mr. Plodgers, supporting his wife in his arms, "we are broke, ruined, demoralized! My air-castle has fallen and crushed me!"

"I always knew," sobbed the distressed lady, "that your air-castle was the poor-house in disguise. Goodness me!"

Bolton handed his message to the boy, who sped away with it.

"Heaven bless you, George!" said Stephanie, softly, and pressing her lips upon his brow; "you are a friend in need and in deed!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FOUND AND LOST.

Edwin Osborne was now convinced that to his brother was due not only the loss of half of a large estate, but also the ill-success which had attended his suit to Stephanie; and his wounded feelings led him into a dissipation for which his early habits had only too well prepared him. A lively sense of conscience had impelled him to make a partial restitution to Bolton through the agency of Tony Grog; but he found it hard to overcome his pride sufficiently to meet Bolton, confess their relationship, and place the rightful heir in possession of his own. Gaming and drinking were the vices which occupied his hours; and his course threatened to exhaust his own resources, and also those of his brother, if it were not soon mended.

Two weeks had passed since his last interview with Stephanie, and he now determined to call again upon the young lady and plead for her consideration of his proposal. His face was flushed, and his manner forced the inference that his potations had been frequent and deep. His

dress was arranged with faultless precision. He had remembered Carlyle's maxim, "There is safety in a swallow-tail," and to the well-cut clothes was added a display of jewelry which made him a conspicuous personage.

A storm had been raging all day, and night had found the elements in bad humor. The sky was occasionally parted by vivid lightning, and the distant thunder foreboded a renewal of the storm. There were few people out of doors, and the night was lonely enough. As Osborne passed into a street that was dark and deserted, he did not observe three men who were following him, until he was seized by the throat, and commanded to remain quiet on peril of his life.

But he was not the man to give a voluntary acquiescence to such a summons. Besides, the wine that he had drunk fired his blood beyond his natural courage, and he struck the fellow in front of him a blow that laid him at his feet. "Help, help!" he cried as the other two attacked him, and then, placing his back against a street lamp, he began a desperate defense. For a moment he maintained himself well; but the odds were overwhelming, and he felt his strength failing under the fury of the assault, when George Bolton, bound also for the Plodgers mansion, and who heard the cry for help, hastened for-

ward, and catching one of the assailants by the throat, bore him to the ground.

Another of the ruffians now drew a pistol and pointed it at Osborne, who seized it and strove to wrest it from him. In the struggle that ensued the weapon was discharged, and the young man sank upon the ground shot through the lungs. The murderer turned and fled, followed by his companions, one of whom snatched Bolton's watch as he ran.

"Oh, I am hurt!" cried Osborne. "Fetch a surgeon, for the love of Heaven!"

Bolton raised the head upon his arm so that the light from the lamp fell upon it. The face seemed familiar, but he could not recollect the occasion of their former meeting.

The young man looked at him wildly.

"George Bolton!" he cried, almost shrieking. "Was it you that drove them off?"

"I am sorry you are hit, "he answered. "Can you not walk? I will help you."

"No. Oh, how it hurts! Bolton, listen: The story that Tony Grog told you is true. *You* are the lost son of Sir Horace Osborne. You are—curse that bullet!—my—my brother."

Bolton pressed the young man to his bosom. "Oh, Edwin, Edwin," he cried, "you are not dying? Let me carry you to some place where I can get help—there is an apothecary's only a block away."

"No—it will soon be over. Bolton, I have written my lawyers of you. Through Tony Grog you can gain possession of all that is your own—and mine. When you—wed Stephanie—oh, this wound!—say that—your brother—blesses"—

His head fell back. His hand grasped Bolton's convulsively. There was a slight struggle and a gasping for breath. Then the eyes opened, looking far away through the dim light that shone upon them, and a smile played about the handsome face. Edwin Osborne was dead.

The storm had ceased, and the clouds now parted as if to light the way for the soul that had gone forth into the great mystery.

CHAPTER XV.

A CALL FROM THE DOWNTRODDEN.

Overwhelmed by the news that came from Bucksport, Mr. Plodgers obtained leave of absence, and, with his family, returned home the next day. Janet had the old mansion newly cleaned and ready for their reception. Many persons called at the house, but Mr. Plodgers was struck by the lack of enthusiasm on the part of those who had formerly given him their active support. The crowd that had received his speeches with acclamations, and cheered his denunciations of Herodotus Tumkins, seemed now to have forgotten him. There had been no band to welcome him home with strains of music; no committee of reception to offer him a banquet, and then send him the bill. In short, he was apparently of as little importance as any private citizen of the town.

He had arrived Thursday afternoon, but too late to save his property. The house and farm which his father's father had purchased by the toil of many years, had that morning been sold to one Anthony Grog, who, after receiving from the sheriff a deed for the property, and de-

claring his intention of assuming possession September 1st, had departed from the town. This delay in ejecting him afforded our member partial relief from his sore anxiety; for he hoped by that time to recover from his financial difficulties, and be able to redeem his homestead.

The election also was to take place September 1st, and he at once entered upon an energetic canvass. The reader will remember that Mr. Plodgers had expressed his determination to introduce the question of Woman's Rights into the discussion that would precede the election. Accordingly, he sent for Tom Blinks to advise with him upon the best manner of conducting the canvass. He received word in reply that Mr. Blinks was now a supporter of Bolton, and therefore could not consistently have any communication on politics with Mr. Plodgers. He then resolved to fight his own battle, and immediately addressed a circular to his fellow-citizens on the subject of Female Suffrage.

In this manifesto he declared that the time was now arrived when Woman must step forward and assert her rightful position, or forever after rock the cradle. Her inferior political condition was the consequence of masculine selfishness and ambition. That vaulting ambition had now, in the language of the noble bard, overleaped

itself, and fallen on its wrong side. The exclusion of women from the polls had permitted the election of corrupt and incompetent men to public places, where they had appropriated the public revenues for their own ends. He would overcome this evil by transferring to the ship of state the influence which was usually relegated to the hearthstone. He would, if he might be allowed to say so, pour soothing syrup down the throat of the public. Woman was the instrument by which he would secure reform; and in furtherance of this project he begged to make the Woman's Rights question the leading issue of the approaching campaign. If his fellow-citizens elected to return him to the honorable body in which he had already, he trusted, faithfully conserved their interests, he would endeavor to effect the passage of a constitutional amendment which would bestow the right of suffrage upon that fair and lovely portion of our citizenship, which had in the past been treated with contumely and neglect.

The first result of this address was that before he had finished his breakfast the next morning, he was waited upon by Mrs. General Leonidas Bragg and Mrs. Lucidea Applegate. Mrs. Bragg was a woman of fifty, very fat and very short, who wore eye-glasses, and carried an an-

cient-looking blue cotton umbrella. Mrs. Applegate was forty; very thin and very tall, with a rasping voice and a certificate of divorce for incompatibility. These creatures were advocates of the cause which Mr. Plodgers had so enthusiastically embraced.

"We come, sir," said Mrs. Leonidas Bragg, "a committee of our down-trodden sisters. Your circular, sir" giving the floor a rap with the umbrella—"permit me to say, will place you in the front rank of philosophers and statesmen."

"As-sured-ly," chanted Mrs. Lucidea Applegate, in a very high key.

"Sir," continued Mrs. Bragg, "our cause is one which calls upon every father, upon every man, for his fullest sympathy and support. The fathers of the Republic—the noble Washington, the ecstatic Jefferson, the lofty Adams, never intended woman to occupy her present degraded position. No! They would sooner, sir," another rap with the umbrella, "have suffered the cause of freedom to slip into the jaws of the British Lion."

"As-sured-ly," sniffed Mrs. Applegate as chorus.

"Sir, you have our gratitude, and will have our support. Every mother in your district owes it to her oppressed sisters to take her babe in her arms and attend

you through your canvass. Your name will be lisped by every suckling in—"

"Oh, never mind the suckers," interjected Mr. Plodgers, who had not had an opportunity to say a word.

"—in the town, sir," continued the lady unheeding his interruption. "We supplicate you to be faithful to—"

"Oh, do not betray us!" gasped the chorus.

"Lucidea, be calm. Where was I? Oh, yes—to our interests; and beg that you will never rest—as indeed we shall give you no opportunity to rest—until you have rebuked the tyrant man, and established woman in the rights which, permit me to say, you have already accorded to negroes."

"As-sured-ly," sang Mrs. Applegate.

"Ladies," replied Mr. Plodgers, making deep obeisance, "my attachment for you in this matter will be of a kind only equalled by the attachment of David for Jonathan, of Damon for Pythias, of Scylla for Charybdis. Our cause is a great one, my opponent is a chuckle-head—"

"A mere nobody," supplemented Mrs. Bragg.

"And," continued Mr. Plodgers, "I see no reason why we should fail. We shall give the subject thorough discussion on the stump, and who can say, but that a woman may yet, in the venerable executive mansion at Washing-

ton, administer the government, and sit upon the bills of Congress."

"Sublime conception!" ejaculated Mrs. Bragg and the umbrella.

"As-sured-ly," assented the seraphic Lucidea.

"Meanwhile, ladies, I have other duties to perform and—"

"Oh, pray don't let us detain you," said Mrs. Bragg. Nevertheless, she was about to begin another broadside, which Mr. Plodgers diplomatically averted by opening the door. As they took their leave, Mrs. Bragg, with a parting flourish of the umbrella, invoked him to steadfastness, and the chorus sang her usual anthem of approval.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR CONSTITUENTS.

After burying his brother, Bolton remained in Washington until the assassin of young Osborne was condemned. Then, after a voluminous correspondence with London attorneys, he at length secured possession of Sir Horace Osborne's estate, retaining, however, the name he had always known, George Bolton.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances connected with their engagement, he had not in all this time written to Stephanie, nor had he heard directly from her. He had decided to refrain until after the election from pressing a suit which was received with such scant favor by the lady's father.

About the middle of August he returned to Bucksport to conduct a canvass of the district. There was a notable contrast between his own reception home and that of his opponent. He was met at the train by Tom Blinks, and the same portion of the constituent body which had done homage to Mr. Plodgers in the last election. Blinks, after music by the band, delivered an address of welcome,

to which Bolton, accepting with good humor the greatness that was thrust upon him, made brief response, simply thanking the "gentlemen," and inviting them to partake of certain hospitalities which Mr. Blinks would dispense.

In the course of a week the young candidate, by his liberality and genial manners, became the lion of the town. He was fluent of speech and possessed of a ready wit which served him well in debate. Though he pushed the canvass with energy and ardor, still he would have preferred to quietly pursue the practice of law; and it was only his love for Stephanie that now impelled him to exchange his reserved life for the unstable honors of public station.

Woman's Rights languished. Mrs. General Leonidas Bragg and Mrs. Lucidea Applegate, accompanied at times by others of their fellow sisters, inflicted almost daily visits upon the Hon. Horatio Plodgers; and their importunities made life a hideous nightmare to that astute statesman. Public meetings had been held, and addresses made by Mr. Plodgers and Mrs. Bragg, but the united efforts of the advocates of the suffrage had failed to arouse either popular sympathy or curiosity.

When, however, Tom Blinks, one week before the

election, announced that Mr. Bolton would take part in the next debate, a ripple of excitement stirred the community.

When the night arrived, there came also a very large and very motley crowd together, with the inevitable brass band, the transparent banners, which reflected the mottoes of the two adverse parties, and the small boys. On a stand erected in the public square, were seated the Hon. Horatio Plodgers, with one or two old-fogy friends; Mrs. Leonidas Bragg, Mrs. Lucidea Applegate, and several others of the down-trodden sex. Bolton had not yet arrived.

At 8 o'clock Colonel Billings Buggs stepped forward, and announced that they had assembled together on that auspicious occasion to discuss a question which concerned the rights of many millions of human beings. He referred to Women, collectively and individually, (faint cheers); and he now begged the honor of introducing a man whose great learning and intelligence had already received the recognition of his fellow-citizens, and who, he had not the slightest doubt, would be a second time elected to represent the constituency of Bucksport in our great National Legislature. After saying thus much, he formally introduced the Hon. Horatio Plodgers.

There were a few cheers, and Mr. Plodgers stepped promptly to the front. As he has not been before described to the reader, I beg now to present a partial likeness of him.

Standing in the full glare of the flickering torches, he looks to be a man of five and fifty years. He is tall, with broad shoulders and very portly bust. His head is large; his hair dark and thin; his face fat and indicating good nature subdued by selfishness; he wears a mustache and imperial of iron gray. His dress is the conventional black broadcloth dress suit of a congressman, and it has apparently been much worn, and shows faint signs of an exhausted credit at his tailor's.

Placing the fingers of one hand in his trowsers pocket, he raised the other to the height of his shoulder, and began his address. His voice was strong and his delivery had all the confidence of inferior capacity.

"My Friends and Fellow Citizens: We are now upon the eve of one of the most important elections that has ever engaged the attention of the American people! A great—a mighty question is presented for your consideration and decision, the question of Woman's Rights. A question which concerns not only the town and district of Bucksport, but which concerns, let me say, the entire

area of this land of freedom, this cradle of liberty. Cradle of Liberty! Glorious metaphor! Methinks I see the American people, man, woman and child, in entire harmony and unity of political opinion, represented by a beauteous babe, occupying this cradle! Look upon its fair face, unmarred by the passion of sectional strife, or any sense of the degradation of woman! Its limbs are not deformed by any congenital malformation! It is plump and healthy! It has been raised on the bottle of Peace. It has jangled the rattle of Unity. And in infantile mirth it places its toe in its toothless gums, and chews and—chews! This, my fellow citizens, is a picture of the people in their—shall I say—Ideal Perfection. This is the rightful occupant of the Cradle of Liberty. But the Child has been disturbed, the cradle upset and the occupant spilt out, whilst a misbegotten urchin, whom I will call Man, usurps its place! Shall this continue? Remember that our fathers signed the Great Declaration with the points of their bayonets; and thinking upon this, you who would deny to Woman the right of suffrage, tremble!

"Who is my opponent? a boy—an ungrateful young man; a fellow who hasn't any wife, or any sister, or any mother, or mother-in-law. Does such a man know any-

thing of woman's rights? But he is worse than this; he is seeking to displace his benefactor—an ingratitude which you, my friends, will never tolerate. And I tell you, with the voice of prophecy, that on the brazen forehead of that young man the finger of Posterity will trace in brazen characters the word *f r o d!*

"My friends, *I* am the candidate of the people. If again elected to the place which I hope I may say I have already occupied with ability and intelligence, I shall strive to revolutionize the present abnormal condition of our women. I would give Woman not only a vote, but an office. How sweet and soul-exhilarating it would be to see our women in Congress! Members could vary the monotony of political debate by sipping tea with their female colleagues. Senators could win votes from the opposition, and thus break the lines of party organization by chucking under the chin the babies of the lady senators. This is what I would bring about; this is what would come from giving the ballot to Woman. And as the exemplar and pattern of that idea, I respectfully invoke the support of every intelligent fellow-citizen, and recommend that your influence be exerted against George Bolton, the impudent personification of the *Man Idea*."

When Mr. Plodgers concluded his great effort, there

was vociferous cheering, which lasted for some minutes. Mrs. General Leonidas Bragg stood up and struck the railing such an enthusiastic blow with the umbrella, that the platform groaned, which caused Mrs. Applegate to shriek loudly. "Be still, Lucidea," exclaimed the lady, "'tis only a loose board." "Oh," said Lucidea, "I thought it was a mouse!"

It was curious to watch the effect which the oration produced upon the audience. They all knew as well as the reader knows, that it was empty and vague, and utcerly ridiculous. And yet such was their sense of fair play—always characteristic of American voters—that not a man of them would interrupt him except with cheering and encouragement, ironical though it was. Good humored attention was pictured on every face, and the applause which followed him when he took his seat, marked their appreciation as much as it did their amusement.

When the excitement had subsided, the band played a familiar air. Then, amidst real enthusiasm and friendly curiosity, Col. Billings Buggs stepped forward and presented George Bolton.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRUE SUFFRAGIST.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN," said Bolton, "I am no orator as Brutus is; and after hearing the argument of Mr. Plodgers, it is with increased embarrassment that I attempt to present this subject from a different view. I am a foe to woman's rights! Had I, like Rumor, a thousand tongues, and the question were raised for my decision, with every one of them would I say *No!* and yet my respect for woman and all that pertains to womanhood, is the highest reach of my religion. Give woman the ballot, and she will but increase the evils which she stoops to correct. By bringing her mind in contact with the things unholy and corrupt that mark the paths of public life, be she pure as snow, she could not avert their potent influence; and once departed from her modesty, she never rules again. If granted political equality she would seek to profit by her power, and presently engage in the canvass, where even men of principle and strong endurance are broken and defiled. Not only upon herself, however, but also upon the government would the retro-

grade be felt. Without training in statecraft, without knowledge of the ways of public life, without protection from surrounding evils, women may never be trusted to control our political system.

"True, there are instances where the courage of woman has shone like a star of glory, leading armies to victory, subduing tyranny and redressing oppressions upon mankind. There are instances where her eloquence has thrilled the people, and where her wisdom and counsel have secured their prosperity. But through all ages her power has been felt chiefly through those quiet, unseen influences which mould the characters of men in every station.

"I would not be understood to mean that woman should be debarred from all privileges save to rock the cradle or order the dinner. Her sphere, though it be within doors, is higher than this. The arts invite her study; the professions partly come within her scope. Painting, Sculpture, Music, Literature—these become the crowning joys of her endeavors. But more exalted are those plain and homely duties of the household. There she is supreme! There her place can never be usurped! Who can fill the mother's place? the sister's? the dear wife's? My friends, woman's right is to be loved, and caressed, and protected

—and for this was she created. Her place is Home. There she is queen. If she would control politics it is there her influence must work. To make her a President, a senator, a representative, or to give her the ballot that she may make herself either of these, I say forever, No! But to protect her in her rights at home, all the manhood that is within me stands enlisted!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOMEBODY BLUNDERED.

It was the first of September, and the great election was proceeding quietly. Tom Blinks was on the ground all day, moving deftly among friends and opponents. Mr. Plodgers was there, too, and tried to carry a bold front; but his face was haggard, and he seemed ill at ease. To-day was the crisis in his career. If he secured the election, there was a chance to retrieve his waning fortunes. If he failed, home and position were immediately lost to him. His credit had been stretched to the last cent, and his friends in all quarters had been taxed for favors, until now he stood upon the brink and there was no retreat.

The day was perfect. The blue depths of the heavens were clear, with the exception of a few feathery clouds which were floating lazily about, and seemed merely for their own amusement, to be continually assuming new shapes. Suddenly there appeared a small dark spot in the far horizon, which gradually grew larger and larger, until it seemed to cover the whole sky. Here and there a blue eye would peep out, struggling in vain against that huge

black monster, which looked as if it were bent upon destroying everything before it. After a few warning growls from it, the blue eyes disappeared. Soon, the whole sky was illuminated by brilliant flashes, which seemed to challenge a battle. Low mutterings of thunder were heard in response, which swelled louder and louder, until at last a fierce conflict raged between the elements. The trees swayed and tossed their branches wildly about, as if entreating help. Suddenly, with an awful crash, a giant elm was split to its root, and fell prostrate to the earth, struck by lightning. Great drops of rain came splashing down, which seemed to be wrung from those sorrowing blue eyes by the havoc of the storm. By and bye, the warring elements, exhausted by the fury of the fight, relaxed their ardor. The dark clouds rolled away; the sun shone forth; and all was once more bright and beautiful.

Stephanie Plodgers watched the storm from a window in the library.

"Mother," she said, when the clouds began to roll away; "this scene inspires me with awe and reverence. How quickly the light has followed the darkness. It is a good omen."

They were making preparations to leave their home,

and it was sad work for both. Mrs. Plodgers had seated herself at a table and was weeping violently. Stephanie was placing her clothing and trinkets in a trunk, stopping occasionally to wipe away a tear, as the reminiscences of former happy days came back to her.

"Dear mother," she said, placing her hand upon the weeping lady's head, "we must leave our house—the place where I was born—and turn our backs upon it—and upon the past. For eighteen years—think of it, dear mother! we have lived here so happily! The sweet memories come tripping back like fairy dreams. The dear friends, the familiar scenes, the old homestead—we leave them all, dear mother, and go forth with father to seek a humbler home."

"Oh, Napolum, Napolum," sobbed Mrs. Plodgers, "your history should have taught my husband the evils of ambition!"

"This frock, mother," said Stephanie, catching up a faded dress—"I put it on ten years ago, and George Bolton and I went through the woods hand in hand, singing merrily, and building castles in the air as high as the trees that stood around us."

"George Bolton!" exclaimed Mrs. Plodgers, starting up with indignation. "Never mention the name of that

man again—he who from early childhood has been treated as our son! Had he a spark of manhood, he would repay our generosity now that we are in trouble, instead of using his wealth for his own selfish ends!"

"Nay, dear mother, you wrong him," answered Stephanie, gently; "I am sure you wrong him. By my father's conduct he is so placed that it would be unmanly in him to proffer aid—and unwomanly in us to receive it from him! But father is coming—can the election be over?"

"May I be sunk in oblivion," cried Mr. Plodgers, as he burst into the room, "if I am not first cousin to that Irishman who never opened his mouth but he put his foot in it."

Stephanie stepped shyly to his side.

"Papa, is George elected?" she asked.

"*Papa, is George elected?*" he said, mimicing her. "Don't be so fond of the chuckle-head's name! Stephanie, those election tickets you placed in my pocket"—

"Yes—were they not the right ones?"

"They nearly worked my ruin."

"How? I thought you said they would help you?'

"I went down to the polls with the election tickets in my overcoat pocket. Tom Blinks—may he die in poverty!

was there, working for Bolton. I laid my overcoat down and went to take a drink"—

"Horatio!" cried Mrs. Plodgers.

"Papa!" said Stephanie.

"—of water. Meanwhile, the villain Blinks, aided by a crew of Bolton's men, took the tickets from my pocket, and replaced them with a lot of Bolton's tickets."

"Yes—the result?" cried Stephanie and her mother in a breath.

"Blinks and his friends left me. I, unwary of the trick, determined to press those tickets upon the voters. A citizen entered. I drew a ticket"—

"A Bolton ticket?" asked his wife.

"A Bolton ticket, or may I be shot! I drew a Bolton ticket from my pocket, and approached the son of a"—

"Horatio!"

"Papa!"

—"of a glorious republic, and said to him, 'My friend, you owe a duty to your country, to society, and to yourself. The individual, sir, who would, in an election where there is so much at stake, vote for any person other than he whose honest and unsullied name is on this ticket'"—

"Still a Bolton ticket?" his wife enquired, incredulously.

"Still a Bolton ticket," replied the statesman, "'is unworthy,' I continued, speaking to this man, 'of the privilege of an American citizen.' And he took the ticket, and voted it for Bolton, although he had intended to vote for me."

"By this time," said Stephanie, "you discovered the trick."

"No, my daughter," he replied, with pathetic mortifi cation. "My stupidity had not yet reached the apex. I continued to assiduously distribute those tickets of Bolton's, until my exertions gave him about sixty-three votes which otherwise would have been cast for me!"

Stephanie resumed her packing. Mrs. Plodgers looked long and hard at her husband.

"Horatio," said she.

"Maria, my love?"

"You are an idiot!" she cried.

"Maria!"

"Horatio!"

"I know it!" said he. "When I had thus turned half my friends and all the doubtful votes into Bolton's ranks, I discovered the trick. I would I were a roar that I might live in a sea-shell!—but I still hope for a majority."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROMISE KEPT.

"Why, Stephanie," exclaimed Mr. Plodgers, as he discovered his daughter's avocation, "are you going on a journey?"

"Papa," she answered, slowly, "the sheriff will be here at five, and we must leave our home."

"The sheriff," he repeated; "I had forgotten that! Has either of you learned who has purchased the house?"

"One Tony Grog," replied Mrs. Plodgers, "but who he may be I cannot say."

At this moment loud cheering was heard in the street. They all ran to the window. Bolton's name was sounded by a hundred voices.

"That means that he is elected!" said Mr. Plodgers, quietly. "It is five o'clock and the polls have closed. Maria—Stephanie," he continued, while his trembling voice marked the sincerity of his emotion, "all I had, and all you had, I staked on this chance. I could not withstand the allurements of public life. I hoped, if suc-

cessful this time, to amend the errors of the past. But my eyes are opened too late! The time is at hand," he cried, as he folded them in his arms and their tears mingled in common sorrow, "when we must turn our backs upon the home that has sheltered us through so many years! God forgive me, for it is my fault, and in my old age I cannot gain another home!"

As the clock struck five the door opened, and Tony Grog, followed by his faithful son, Richard Bosworth, hobbled into the room.

"It is Tony Grog," whispered Mrs. Plodgers.

Mr. Plodgers turned and looked him over from head to foot.

"And is this the kind of man," he cried, wrathfully, "that would turn tender women from their homes? Had he a title signed by every sheriff in America, I would put my protest on it—thus!"

As he advanced in a threatening manner, and raised his arm to strike, Tony stepped aside in some alarm, and losing his balance, fell prostrate.

"Floored, by gad!" he cried.

The spirit of Plantagenet blazed up in Richard Bosworth. "Ho, that I was a bigger sprig nor I ham!" he exclaimed.

"Ho, that I had the sword which I fit into the Crimean war!" yelled Tony.

Mr. Plodgers might have committed vengeance upon the intruders, had not Tom Blinks, with Janet on his arm, appeared in the room.

"Tom Blinks," cried Mr. Plodgers, "who's elected?"

"I have persuaded Janet to say that *I* am," said Tom, unconsciously; and Janet blushed.

Other steps were heard upon the threshold. Stephanie opened the door, and the Hon. Rashleigh Waldron and Alice Crivet, both looking very happy in the light of a recent explanation and exchange of confidence, were seen on the threshold.

"Rashleigh Waldron!" exclaimed Mr. Plodgers, stepping forward, "of all men, you are most welcome. But how comes it you are in company with my niece?"

"I always supposed she was your daughter, sir, until my arrival here one hour since. But, happily, my regard is for herself, and I care not whose daughter she is."

"But, Stephanie, you—you love Mr. Waldron, don't you?" he inquired, ill-pleased with the turn affairs were taking.

"No, papa."

"But who's elected?" cried Mr. Plodgers, returning to the topic which was uppermost in his mind.

"Why, sir," said Tony Grog, "if ye hadn't floored me so sudden I was agoin' to tell you. George Bolton, my master, sir, was elected by a large majority."

"*George Bolton—your master!*" repeated Mr. Plodgers; "then this house belongs to him?"

"It do, sir."

"Maria—Stephanie," said he, "it is five o'clock. George Bolton is coming—let us give him undisturbed possession of his house. Come with me, my wife and child, for I cannot go alone! Come, wife—and you, my jewel. George Bolton, whom we have raised in this house, is now its master—we must go!"

Mr. Plodgers took his wife and daughter to his arms, and, holding his head erect, with his dormant manhood and tenderness now asserting their dignity, he started with firm step toward the door. Mrs. Plodgers took a fond glance at the old room with its surroundings. Stephanie looked wistfully at the friends, who seemed paralyzed when they should have been most active. As the three reached the door, a step was heard in the hall and George Bolton entered.

"Mr. Plodgers," he cried, "one moment, please."

They all turned, and Stephanie's face looked as if an angel were whispering words of hope in her ear.

"Mr. Plodgers, two years ago you secured a promise from your daughter that she would marry only with a member of Congress—a promise from which you have since refused to release her. I loved her then—I had loved her for years, and believed that I could win her afiection in return. But in the face of this promise, what was I to do? Only one course lay open to me by which I might hope to win her hand. I have been successful: behold, sir, my certificate of election to the Congress of the United States!" Despite his efforts, he could not conceal his pride in this announcement.

"Bolton," said Mr. Plodgers, with quiet dignity, "may you represent the people better than I did. We will not dispute your possession of the house."

He again turned to go.

"One word more, sir. To-day your creditors held a meeting, and every claim was paid. As to this house, I do not want it. I beg you, sir, from my heart, to accept it from one who still owes much to you for your kindness in his youth."

Mr. Plodgers felt now as he had never felt since his own young manhood, when he had won the love of his present wife.

"Bolton," he said, with a husky voice, "I have wronged

you more than I have wronged all others, or myself. I will make what reparation I can." He took his daughter's hand tenderly, lovingly. "My own folly, sir, has left me but one treasure—one bright jewel that I have saved from the general wreck. Take her, sir—for, from the bottom of my heart, I say, you have won her!"

Bolton's eyes filled as he felt the warm pressure of the soft hand within his own, and he gently led her away from those whose gaze only increased her embarrassment.

"Will you consent to my marriage with your niece, sir?" asked Rashleigh Waldron.

"If she says so, so say I," he replied. "But it was a sly trick, Alice!"

"And, please, sir," said Janet, as red as a berry, "I would like to give notice to quit, if dear Mrs. Plodgers can get other help?"

"Take her, Blinks," said Mr. Plodgers, "but see that you never change the tickets again!"

"Oh," said Janet, as she felt Blinks' arm around her waist, "this is *so* romantic!"

"And now, Maria, my life," said our ex-member, turning to her in entire contentment and with a sunny face, "now that I am once more a plain country gentleman,

who is contented with what he already owns—let me embrace you!"

"My sentiments, Janet," cried Tom Blinks.

"And mine, Alice," whispered Waldron.

"Yes, but we are not related as uncle and aunt are," she interposed, resisting.

"But soon shall be if you will consent?" he said.

When Night threw her dark veil over the busy world, George Bolton and Stephanie Plodgers sat together under the elm tree in front of the old house. The moon peeped at them over the hill; the twinkling stars seemed conscious of their happiness; and even the leaves of the old tree dropped dewy tears of gladness.

He held her closely to his heart, and they talked softly of their early love, of their separation, of his struggles and her grief; of his success, his hopes for the future, and his present plans. She said that she would share his work with him; and their efforts should always be mutual, so that, as they went onward, each would feel and rely upon the sustaining ability of the other. In the sweet communion of that hour their souls, and all that was divine within them, seemed merged and interchanged. Love is not of the earth, earthy; nor were our lovers so

to-night. After the experience of the past, they felt drawn by an unseen power to each other; and all that was noblest and best in either seemed now aroused, as if from sleep,

"For they walked
Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of love
Who stilled the rolling wave of Galilee."

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